

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Samuel Gompers Career and Technical Education High
School**

High school X655

**455 SOUTHERN BLVD
BRONX
NY 10455**

Principal: JOYCE MILLS KITTRELL

Dates of review: November 09-10, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Geri Taylor-Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Samuel Gompers Career and Technical Education High School is a High school with 859 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 30% Black, 67% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 78% of the students enrolled and girls account for 22%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 73.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is developing a safe environment with guidance supports for personal growth that results in a desire by students to want to learn. (1.4)
 - Students cutting classes and lateness prompted administrators to actively conduct hallway sweeps. This engaging practice has not only impacted on-time student arrival to class, but has also increased overall class attendance. As a result, this is leading to quieter hallways and a more positive and safer tone. In addition, teachers are starting to see some improved class work products as students have more time in class to focus on the quality of their work.
 - In some classrooms students express a desire to learn collaboratively and specifically noted that teachers help them "build team effort skills". This practice is most evident in Career Technology Education (CTE) classes where students usually work jointly on projects. For example, two CTE class students provided guidance and direction to their peer who had been absent and needed information that was missed. This good practice of students-teaching-students empowers students to own, direct and improve their learning.
- The school is beginning to make informed organizational decisions that address the learning needs for all students and impacts achievement. (1.3)
 - School leaders reorganized instruction for English Language Learners (ELL) whose test results indicated they were in Level 1 in English language arts (ELA). In the past these students were relegated to self-contained classes to strengthen their English skills in content areas. The current design places an English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teacher in the content area classes with the students. The principal states, "It's working." This model has "helped students understand science concepts better. They are using scientific words in English and their native languages." In addition, the school has abandoned their previous professional learning community teacher team design. Teams now meet daily "by department". This new design helps teachers strengthen their content knowledge and share curriculum tasks within their subject area. As a result curriculum tasks in some classes are more strongly grounded in content to support some targeted improvements in achievement.
- The new school wide grading policy guidelines offer a consistent foundation for administrators and teachers to assess student progress and implement instruction to improve learning. (2.3)
 - The cabinet meets weekly to examine student data from scholarship reports, summative State exam data and class data. These discussions and suggestions from staff led to the development of the "High School Contract." This document includes a school wide grading policy and lists policies, procedures and guidelines, in English and Spanish, for parents and students. Now all stakeholders have a common framework for measuring student growth.
 - Teachers in three content areas (math, technology and science) are examining student data through the usage of the "Schedula" data analysis tool. This recently adopted practice enables these teachers to examine both "whole class" and "overall school" data trends. Data gleaned from this tool led some of these

teachers to “re-teach” topics that appear to be challenging for students. As a result the passing rate of students in these classes was “higher than last fall.”

- School leaders have developed current school goals that provide a common academic focus and emphasize building student progress. (3.1)
 - The current list of school goals are directly linked with the school's Regents examination results. Each goal calls for increasing student performance on specific exams. Some teachers included Regents-type questioning in some of their lessons. Subsequently, students are now more familiar and comfortable with these summative exam tasks and feel better prepared to do well on each exam. In addition, the school has developed an action plan as part of their School Improvement Grant. Administrators noted that 40% of students failed one or more subjects in the first marking period. These students are offered an opportunity to “make up work” during afterschool or Saturday sessions. As a result the principal states, “More students are mastering the tasks they did not master during the first marking period.”

What the school needs to improve

- Create a standards aligned curriculum aligned to specific State standards to ensure that all students have opportunities to improve their academic achievement. (1.1)
 - The school has not yet fully developed curricula in any of the content areas that provide appropriately rigorous tasks for high school students. The school's action planning calls for initial efforts in this area to begin in November of the current school year. However, even the initial efforts are not significantly effective as there is not yet a clear school wide focus on any specific State standards. Classroom visits also show that the majority of academic tasks are generalized and do not promote higher order thinking. In multiple classrooms all students were charged with completing the same task which involved answering Bloom's Level 1 questions on an answer sheet. Ultimately, students are not challenged or properly prepared to meet the academic demands that are required to be successful.
- Train all teachers in the usage of differentiated instruction so that all lessons include challenging and engaging tasks that promote student growth. (1.2)
 - Nearly every teacher has adopted the lesson format of writing a lesson “Aim” that begins with, “How”. However, this effort to deepen student thinking has not yet rendered teacher usage of varied or targeted instruction. This delivery of undifferentiated teaching severely limits opportunities for students to increase their learning. In addition, in many classrooms generalized questioning resulted in students sitting passively until they are called upon by the teacher to answer. This lack of engagement thwarts student interest and stifles their natural inquisitiveness and desire to explore subjects more deeply. As a result academic achievement data is not increasing in the school as reflected in a grade of “F” for student progress on the New York City Progress Report, as well as student work samples.
- Develop a structure to support ongoing assessments that appropriately measure student success and provide teachers with meaningful data to make instructional adjustments that improve student learning. (2.2)

- The lack of firm standards aligned curricula adversely effects the creation of assessments that truly measure student progress. Teachers stated that they have not yet been offered adequate training in the deep analysis and usage of student data. Subsequently, there are no significant or effective changes made to instructional approaches when students have difficulty understanding lessons which thwart academic growth.
- Teachers have begun sharing classroom information about student data in their department team meetings. However, these discussions only peripherally cover information about students who pass or fail. For example, one team did a comparison of 9th and 10th grade “passing rates” in ELA and foreign language classes. Their more in-depth discussion revolved around strategies to alleviate “disruptive” student behavior. Without a deeper analysis of student assessment data teachers will continue to prepare and teach lessons that do not address the true learning needs of students.
- Prepare teachers to work collaboratively in using data to develop targeted and differentiated goals for individual students and student groups so that all students have the opportunity to achieve success. (3.2)
 - Teachers speak about setting data informed, targeted goals for all students. However, these efforts are not actualized in the classroom lessons. Student work products and student testimonies speak to students performing the same tasks class-wide. Although students sit in small groupings there is no variation or differentiation of curriculum or next steps for where they need to go academically to achieve their goals. In addition, there are no linkages between content team focuses and individual teacher improvement strategies in their classroom practices. This leads to students being academically stumped without intervention supports inside the classroom to achieve their learning goals.
- Implement formal and informal classroom observations as part of a teacher development plan that provides teachers with meaningful feedback, explains next steps and guides their instructional practice in helping all students succeed. (4.1)
 - The school had developed a classroom observation template to be used by school leaders. This form contains an area where “recommendations and next steps” are to be noted. However, teachers report that they have not consistently received written feedback from the “walkthroughs” and “impromptu meetings” from administrators since the beginning of the school year. Moreover, classroom visits showed that the only common framework shared by teachers is the usage of the word “how” at the beginning of every lesson. One teacher specifically noted that he had done self-directed reflection and had sought professional learning opportunities on his own to improve his teaching skills. Learning for children and adults is vastly hampered by this lack of effective teacher evaluation and preparation.
- Develop interim benchmarks to measure student progress toward goals and to ensure that adjustments are made that promote academic improvement. (5.3)
 - The principal and cabinet members meet regularly and the principal states that they review student data and pertinent information about student progress. According to the principal, they only “examine historical data” at the beginning of the school year. They look at interim data “in January” and “examine” information on the passing rate of classes at the end of the marking periods. However, this cyclical look at school information lacks the focus and careful

monitoring involved in establishing a solid system of data review to identify areas in need of improvements and make adjustments that improves student learning. Thus, student achievement is not positively impacted by this practice.

- The school leaders develop school goals every year. However, this goal setting does not involve plans that include long range considerations. This is evidenced as instructional and organizational interventions have short-lived implementation periods. This trial and error way of developing and implementing initiatives does not support finding the true root causes that impede student progress. As a result student achievement declines as indicated by the college readiness index of 4.4% as compared to 7.2% for peer schools.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Samuel Gompers Career and Technical Education High School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score	X			
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?	X			
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?	X			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?		X		
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?		X		
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?	X			
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?	X			
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?		X		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?	X			
Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X	
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?	X			
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?	X			
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?	X			

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?	X						
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?	X						
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?	X						
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?	X						
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?	X						
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?	X						
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?	X						
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?	X						
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed