



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**High School of Telecommunication
Arts and Technology**

High School K485

**350 67th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11220**

Principal: Xhenete Shepard

**Date of review: April 27, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Marcella Barros**

The School Context

High School of Telecommunications Arts and Technology is a high school with 1,329 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 8% Black, 57% Hispanic, 16% White, and 18% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.5%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Additional Findings	Proficient
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Developing
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide staff training connected to the elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness to students and families.

Impact

Communication through staff training has led to a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations. Family partnerships connected to a path to college and career readiness lead to student progress toward high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Conversations with teachers and leadership explained how teachers are trained in facilitative leadership activities such as using a protocol during teacher team meetings to discuss lesson plans, academic tasks, and student work as well as provide peer feedback. School leaders and staff stated it is an expectation that all teacher teams utilize systems such as Google Docs to track events, and a rotation of roles occur within these meetings. In addition, teachers stated they are expected to follow up on action plans set for the group and report their findings to the team using student work. During an interdisciplinary tenth grade meeting, a science teacher with the support of team members examined student writing samples to evaluate a group of students' understanding of analyzing evidence using key terms and categories. A review of school documents reflect this expectation is ongoing with teachers reporting their findings and effective strategies to each other.
- A school-wide professional development plan is designed around the school's instructional focus of increasing the rigor of text-based academic tasks. Some examples of teacher-led workshops include an introduction to the Google classroom, performance skills for the classroom, Wilson Reading, and making texts accessible to students. A review of several lesson plans include tasks designed to target the instructional focus, instructional shifts and modifications such as chunked text, and questions used as scaffolds for students with disabilities (SwDs) and English language learners (ELLs).
- During an interview, parents described the various ways they are informed of their child's progress and feel supported in helping to prepare them for college and career readiness. For example, one parent stated that she attended a financial literacy workshop at the school, offered through a partnership between the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Alma Bank, which helped her begin a college savings plan for her child. Grade-level meetings and workshops are conducted on the Common Core Learning Standards and were reported as helpful in understanding what their child is learning in school. Other workshops were also viewed as helpful such as those which provide information and support with SwDs. Parents described how web-based platforms such as Google Drive and Delta Math were used to track homework and provide feedback to their child which they reported as helpful. Parents reported that they are able to view the areas of challenge for their child and how they increase progress in different subject areas.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teacher practices included questioning and scaffolds, but entry points and high levels of student discussion and work products was uneven.

Impact

Tasks and discussions are in the process of engaging all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, to demonstrate high levels of critical thinking and participation in work products.

Supporting Evidence

- There was some evidence of student thinking relative to the Depth of Knowledge (DoK) Levels 3 and 4 and full participation in student discussions. In one ninth English language arts (ELA) classroom, students were engaged in group discussions that prepared them to begin brainstorming ideas for essay topics that addressed the question, “How does E.L. Doctorow use a symbolic character to show the individual struggle surrounding change in America?” However, in another tenth grade ELA class, the teacher mediated a whole class discussion with recall questions regarding their reading from *Brave New World* including, “What do Lenin and Henry do on their date? Where do they go? What do they do in a solidarity service? Where does it take place?” One or two students raised their hands to respond to the questions.
- In a ninth grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) ELA classroom, students were asked to respond to questions in writing in order to prepare for a college level discussion on the *Myth of the Flying African*. In subsequent group discussions, students shared various interpretations of the text including how the myth represented a symbol of freedom from slavery. However, in a tenth grade music class, the posted aim read, “What are our new classroom procedures for the piano unit?” The teacher mediated a whole class review of the quiz, where each question was read and students shared their answers. The teacher did not prompt students to explain their reasoning after sharing correct and/or incorrect answers.
- Across some classrooms, teachers use leveled readings, guiding questions, discussion protocols and graphic organizers to support ELLs and SwDs during instruction. In one tenth grade global studies class on the impact of the Gutenberg printing press on society, students were assigned one of four possible texts. They were prompted to read and annotate the text for key words, and identify evidence for or against why the printing press was a revolutionary invention. Students began to share their findings with their partners and gather ideas on making claims and counter claims. However, in a tenth grade ICT living environment class, students were about to begin a four-day laboratory assignment on biodiversity. As a ‘Do Now’ assignment, they were asked to independently read the lab procedure and calendar of activities. One teacher mediated a whole class discussion asking questions such as, “What did you read? What are we doing? What are we investigating? Why is it important? What is the purpose?” Few students were able to respond to these questions. The other teacher went on to explain the tasks for the day and directed students to begin the first activity.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, the instructional shifts and make purposeful decisions to build coherence. Curricula lessons and tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Across grades and subject areas, curricula and academic tasks build coherence to promote college and career readiness. A diversity of learners, including ELLs and SwDs, have access to curricula and tasks to promote cognitive engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents reflect a school designed resource with skills aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards that identifies literacy standards in English language arts (ELA) and skills connected to the standards of math practice. For example, an eleventh grade United States history curricular map prioritizes the Common Core Learning Standards and skills such as citing evidence to support cause and effect, and identifying purpose and point of view. The school's decision to focus on how to select and teach challenging texts is aligned to the instructional shifts. For example, a social studies project on Stalin includes connections to a text excerpt from Macbeth and a scientific text on selective breeding.
- A review of lesson plans demonstrate evidence of strategies and scaffolds for a diversity of learners, including for ELLs and SwDs, and aligned to Universal Design for Learning (UDL). A tenth grade science lesson plan on the topic of human impact on the environment requires students to complete an argumentative essay. The task includes group and pair-work to discuss potential claims, a Hochman graphic organizer to create an outline, annotation of research texts, and collaborative peer-to-peer revision. The corresponding unit was planned using the results of a summative assessment that measured various students' skills including applying synonyms for analysis and organizing categories to focus the conclusions and arguments. For example, in a ninth grade global studies lesson plan on Machiavelli and Stalin contained modifications such as chunked text excerpts of *The Prince*, a graphic organizer for students to cite and analyze text evidence, a word bank of transition words for claim and counterclaim, and tiered guiding questions.
- Language and content objectives from a global studies and English as a second language (ESL) lesson plan state that students will identify and develop key ideas of the belief systems in Christianity and Buddhism. The plan reveals that students are assigned a chapter reading on the subject, tiered vocabulary words and a graphic organizer to document similarities and differences in the two belief systems. The plan requires student partnerships to compare notes for accuracy and complete a reflection on their circle discussions. The corresponding unit plan reflects that the use of assessment data to refine this lesson and includes student reflections on circle discussions, quizzes, essays, and a final unit assessment.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses the data from common assessments to track student progress toward goals. Across classrooms, teachers consistently use ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment as levers to gauge student understanding.

Impact

The analysis of student progress data by staff lead to the adjustment of curricula and instruction. Teacher in-the-moment effective adjustments using formative assessment data leads to meeting student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers use trackers, questioning, reflection sheets and student conferences to check for student understanding of the lesson. In some classes, teachers use independent or group work time to circulate and assess skill levels. For example, in an eleventh grade ELA class, the teacher tracked students' skill levels in summarizing the context, paraphrasing and making connections which were all components of a rubric on using symbolic meaning in an essay. The teacher circulated to groups asking questions such as, "Why would Doctorow develop HH and use him in this story? How does he connect to the rest of the characters? What does he say about the big picture?"
- School leader and teacher conversations demonstrated that the school administers New York City (NYC) performance tasks in ELA across all disciplines and the performance task in geometry for math to identify target skills for improvement and appropriate strategies to address them. For example in math, assessment data revealed that students' ability to interpret an equation, expression or diagram was identified as a target skill. Teachers adjusted instruction to incorporate a graphic organizer to scaffold the breakdown of expressions with forward and inverse operations. Monitoring of student progress revealed that some students were successful with the graphic organizer provided, while others struggled. In subsequent lessons, a T-chart was used instead to have the students follow specific steps to solve the problem on one side and provide an explanation on the other side. Subsequent monitoring demonstrated that students increased their performance in this skill by using chunking as an independent strategy for solving problems.
- Students are provided a paragraph peer-editing rubric where they score and provide comments to each other in areas such as embedding evidence, interpretation of evidence, and connections to claim. In a tenth grade English class, students used a paragraph rubric. The rubric contains a 5 point system with a focus on the following areas: claim, context, evidence, and interpretation. Peers use this rubric to provide feedback to each other using a reflection sheet. In an ICT tenth grade English class, students comment on each other's writing utilizing a 4 point literary analysis rubric and assess areas such as the introduction and thesis, evidence and analysis, and organization. This rubric was also viewed in use during other class visits. After reading a poem by Robert Hayden and writing an analysis of the text, students used the rubric and gave other feedback.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Teacher teams analyze instructional practices, assessment data and target students’ work systematically throughout the year.

Impact

Inquiry-based, professional collaborations have strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and increased achievement for all learners. Teacher team analyses result in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students

Supporting Evidence

- Grade teams engage in an inquiry cycle that focuses on the Common Core Learning Standards in order to design strategies and are followed up by intervisitations, lesson study, and the examination of student work focused on academic, targeted skills. During a team interview, teachers stated that they identified “selecting evidence from multiple sources” as an area of focus. They stated that they incorporated Hochman’s instructional strategies to build academic language and vocabulary. Students’ increased ability to paraphrase and engage in basic conceptual analysis was evident through research papers in their ELA classes. In a ninth grade team meeting, teachers discussed the skills they focused on during the year including paraphrasing evidence in complex, primary source texts and using key words and phrases to connect evidence to a claim. They discussed what strategies already proved successful including guided annotations, Socratic seminars, and asking students to assess the strength of their evidence. After examining performance data, they targeted their next areas of focus, which included textual analysis and identifying counterclaim.
- In a math meeting, teachers examined student work samples, including exit tickets from recent lessons, and led a discussion. Teachers discussed the results of an exit ticket collected during a lesson on graphing equations and inequalities. After learning that some students struggled with their understanding of slope and the y-intercept, teachers discussed the possible root causes. In one instance, they identified that ELL students struggled with reading, interpreting, and writing math terms connected with the topic. They decided to implement strategies such as text chunking, visuals, and purposeful groupings for those students.
- An examination of teacher team documents demonstrates that lesson study teams choose a range of students that they will track for the whole year. After examining the fall administration of NYC baseline assessments in ELA, teachers identified target traits such as counter claim, organization and conventions as focus areas for improvement. After agreed upon adjustments were made such as implementing peer editing and revision, Hochman writing strategies and essay outlines, there was improvement of at least 1.2 points in organization and conventions based on target students’ assessments.