



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

**Robert H. Goddard High School of Communication
Arts and Technology**

High School Q308

**138-30 Lafayette Street
Queens
NY 11417**

Principal: Joseph Birgeles

**Date of review: November 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

The School Context

Robert H. Goddard High School of Communication Arts and Technology is a high school with 607 students from grade 9 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 30% Asian, 7% Black, 40% Hispanic, and 18% White students. The student body includes 2% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.1%.

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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts through emphasizing rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills embedded in a coherent way across grades and content areas.

Impact

College and career readiness is promoted for all students across grades and content areas through demonstration of higher-order skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Professional development with teachers focuses on elevating educational study skills and aims to ensure students are completing test corrections and reflections accordingly. Rationale for the strategies is to strategically help improve questioning techniques and student engagement especially with English Language Learners (ELLs). Professional development has also focused on a shift from Bloom's taxonomy to Depth of Knowledge questioning.
- Lesson plans list potential student misconceptions and suggest teachers anticipate those misconceptions by using strategies such as having students bold the vocabulary in text, provide images and create a definition with complex words.
- Staff improved their previous curriculum by refocusing on students reading informational text and higher leveled text. The new Lexile array of increased complex vocabulary has teachers planning lessons with tiered vocabulary so all students are given work at their depth of understanding. Additionally, in classrooms a word wall of "graveyard words" is posted of non-complex or low-order thinking words teachers do not want students using anymore in their essay writing.
- Math instructional shifts throughout instruction have raised assessment scores in part due to a partnership with the National Training Network (a math Common Core training program). The partnership has supported the school's goal of aligning the algebra curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards through monthly professional development and curriculum planning team sessions.
- An analysis of many students who were reading well below grade level led to the purchase of a computer-based differentiation literacy program. The goals of using this program are to promote higher-order thinking skills and to assess an individual student's reading level and assign unique informational text reading comprehension activities based on the Common Core Learning Standards. The primarily non-fiction readings are designed to improve literacy one to two levels by the year's end. Students who have reached mastery and read well-above grade level are assigned SAT-based assignments through Khan Academy, a free, online, educational enrichment organization.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best as evidenced by students engaged in discussions and completion of their classroom tasks.

Impact

Beliefs in how students learn best are informed by the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* where students have some opportunities to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills through rigorous instruction and visual representation, although student ownership of tasks was often limited, hindering opportunities to further elevate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Students in a math class discussion on graphing inequalities voiced their agreement or disagreement with statements of equations showing numbers as more than, less than, or equal to. In a government economics class, students were given the opportunity to develop their own perspective on the death penalty and argue their opinion with relevant facts in small groups. One student changed his viewpoint of the death penalty based on an argument presented by another group member.
- In an earth science class, students used pictures of plate tectonic boundaries to explain the direction of movement before engaging in a hands-on activity using various foods to represent the crustal boundary movements. The students were given a choice regarding how to use various food products to represent the boundary movement by writing out a clearly defined procedure that would be replicable. The activity allowed students to demonstrate their thinking through visual representation with choice. However, the provision of specific foods inherently suggested some expected method of application and expected results for students.
- In a Socratic discussion based on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, students provided evidence for their opinion on the nature of love and money within marriage. Students noted this approach to discussion is something they do regularly. They also mentioned that they try to support their findings with enough evidence to convince their classmates of their opinion. In another class using the Socratic approach, a student challenged one of his classmates about her view of Imperialism using a guide of sentence frames. He stated, "I agree with you because I believe that they just wanted to make it seem like the European way," although no specific evidence explaining his perspective was provided.
- Students used robots they previously programmed to follow a black line on a large sheet of paper. Groups of students using laptops tried to recalibrate the robot when it did not work properly around the classroom. If they did not know what to do as next steps, they watched tutorial videos and attempted the task again.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers' use of assessments and rubrics are aligned with the school's curricula. Assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Assessments have delivered actionable feedback to students, allowing effective adjustments by teachers to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- State assessment data has revealed students are struggling with English. The school recognized the need to address specific strategies for teachers to know more clearly what content the students need to know to achieve success at a greater level. Teachers grade all exams, reflect on the results in Google Docs and identify those students who have achieved performance above an 85%, 65%-84%, and 64% or below.
- Students are partially aware of their goals based on assessment data and communications from their teacher. Students shared they sometimes get feedback from their teachers who will talk to them. However, most communicated they rely on Pupil Path, an online student management system, to check their grades. They said sometimes there is written feedback and "we can message our teachers."
- Self-assessment reflection templates are used by most classes for students to make test corrections following an exam. Students have to identify what skill or topic is being tested with each question and whether or not they got the question wrong because of a careless mistake or they didn't know the correct answer. However, it was not apparent that students were able to use the tool for identifying their next learning steps.
- A science teacher shared her use of the online learning tool Castle Learning to assess students' knowledge in biology/living environment. The teacher prints out student sessions reports and vocabulary study sheets for individual students to help them focus on topics they are struggling with.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations that are connected to college and career readiness to the entire staff and provide training and communicate expectations to help families.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability has been established for staff while ensuring families can support progress for their child to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Micro-focused walk-throughs and feedback protocols have been established in the school to build a deeper understanding of teacher practices and provide opportunities for communicating the school vision of “success is a choice.” The micro-focused walk-through visits are strategic by focusing on a specific Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching* domain such as questioning techniques. Staff is made aware in advance that building administration will be looking for a variety or series of questions to challenge students cognitively with high-level thinking and discussion. Feedback to staff includes a commendation and areas for improvement. Additionally, teachers are informed of their normed score had the micro-focused walk-through been a formal observation. Teachers reply to the feedback with next steps they would implement to improve student achievement.
- A school-wide summer reading program has been established to maintain a rigorous college preparatory curriculum for all students entering grades 9-12. In a letter mailed home, parents are informed to encourage their child to read a novel of their choice based on a provided list. A five-paragraph essay that identifies an obstacle the main character must overcome or a central idea from the novel is due for all students on the first day of school. However, students moving from grade 10 English to grade 11 Advanced Placement Language and Literature are purposefully assigned *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley for their assignment.
- Following the previous year’s survey results, the school identified a priority area in need of more improvement was an increase in opportunities for parents to communicate with their teachers about their students’ performance. As a result, a revised Parent Handbook was developed and shared with families. Additionally, a family involvement and engagement best practices workshop was held to build strong family and community ties. Parents shared they are able to communicate with or from the school via the parent tab of the main school web page, School Messenger, Pupil Path and the PTA Remind 101 text alert. All parents spoken to agree the school does “an outstanding job” of communicating with them and they feel “fully informed” about their child’s college and career readiness.

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 collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity through the systematic analysis of key elements in teacher work including practice, assessment data, and student work.

Impact

School wide coherence of instruction has increased student achievement for all learners and improved shared teacher practices and mastery of goals.

Supporting Evidence

- An interdepartmental and grade teacher meeting identified the lowest third of students based on progress report data and quarterly report cards. Teachers explained the students they are targeting and the selection process used. They shared interventions strategies used currently and what strategies have been effective. The meeting concluded with consensus on implementation of collaborative instructional strategies and identification of a mentor for each student.
- Observation feedback is driving key decisions for teacher teams to strengthen their lessons by frontloading the strategies in the beginning of the year. The feedback is shared in an online, cloud-based document sharing platform which is accessible by all staff. Teachers are recommended to share the strategies with their department members at meetings and identify a timeline adjustment for the new strategies to be implemented. In an English 11 lesson, it was determined to have students make connections between their claims about the central idea and the literacy device that best supports the claim after data revealed students struggled with how to effectively use the literary device.
- During a math teacher team meeting, student assessments were provided for all participants to review. The team discussed strategies they use during instruction of geometry to aide in comprehension and areas they identified student misconceptions, based on review of the student assessments. One teacher shared an approach she used where students had to poke a hole in the paper and match the two plains together. Through this model her students were able to demonstrate increased understanding, and “get it,” where previously she felt many more misconceptions existed.
- A social studies teacher shared that a benefit of the inquiry-based team meetings has been the inclusion of transferrable skills from English. For example, shared vocabulary words and a focus on transition words were seen as beneficial to students who now could see the connections between core content areas.