



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**S. Gompers Career and Technical High School**

**High School 655  
455 Southern Boulevard  
Bronx  
NY 10455**

**Principal: Ms Joyce Mills-Kittrell**

**Dates of review: February 5 – 6, 2007  
Reviewer: Eileen Hill**

# Content of the report

## **Part 1: The School Context**

Information about the school

## **Part 2: Overview**

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

## **Part 3: Main Findings**

Overall evaluation

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

## **Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

S. Gompers School is a technical high school with 1511 students enrolled in grades 9 through 12. Most students are male with only 25.5% female. Sixty-eight per cent of students are Hispanic and 29% Black. There are very few Asian and White students. The first language of the majority of students is Spanish. Around 20% of those enrolled are special education students and around one 16% are English language learners. Forty percent of those students entering the school in grade 9 are overage for the grades and almost 80% of them have lower than expected levels of literacy. The school is eligible for Title 1 funding for 85% of its students. This figure is higher than for similar schools.

The school offers all students the opportunity to major in a technical subject and those who graduate receive an additional vocational diploma. The school is overcrowded for the size of the building and runs flexible schedules to accommodate classes for all its students. Student stability is higher than for similar schools and there are comparatively few recent immigrants. At 89%, attendance is slightly higher than for similar schools but below that of City schools. The number of suspensions each year is very high and much higher than for similar sized schools. The teaching staff is stable and many have been at the school for more than 10 years. Teacher absence is higher than for similar schools. Currently the school has two of its nine assistant principals on long-term absence and this imposes a strain on the administration.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school is making consistent use of data on all its students to measure performance and progress for groups, classes, individuals and grades.
- As a result of the focus on data, the school has improved the proportion of students passing end of grade assessments and of those graduating.
- Outcomes for students compare favourably with those for similar schools, particularly in mathematics and history.
- Data is used well to inform whole school planning and to focus on those areas in need of greatest improvement, such as the literacy skills of students entering 9th grade.
- Data on students' progress and performance are shared effectively with teachers and some make good use of it to drive instruction.
- Instructional activity is aligned well with the mandated curriculum and with the skills students need in order to graduate.
- In general, teachers respond well to the academic and vocational needs of the students and foster their success.
- Professional development is well targeted and is beginning to help teachers to improve their planning, instruction and assessment of students' progress.
- Assistant principals regularly monitor instructional activities and some set teachers targets for improvement.
- New teachers are supported well in developing their classroom management and instructional skills.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop improved and consistent use of diagnostic assessment to identify the specific learning needs of individual students.
- Ensure that all teachers plan their lessons effectively and use the data available to differentiate their teaching to meet the needs of groups and individuals in their classes.
- Improve the quality of instructional activity so that students are engaged and motivated.
- Improve attendance at classes during the school day and at after school enrichment programs.
- Improve the consistency and effectiveness of school planning to include clear, objectively measurable short- and long-term goals.
- Improve the consistency and effectiveness of the assistant principals in implementing new initiatives and in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The school has made considerable progress in generating and using data to understand the performance of its students. As a result of the focus on data, cohorts of students make better progress than previously. Graduation rates have improved and are above those for similar schools. Goal setting draws on the analysis and review of data, although subjects and faculty are not always rigorous in setting measurable objectives for success. Goals and plans drive the activity of all members of the school community but the quality of instructional activity is inconsistent and expectations of students are not universally high. The curriculum aligns with the mandated curriculum and scheduling is flexible to support the needs of individual students. Attendance is a high priority for the school, but cutting of classes is a persistent issue. The principal is respected by the staff and has a clear vision for the school. Assistant principals, while energetic, do not yet work together coherently as a team and are not consistent in the way they monitor and implement developments in the school so the school is not yet achieving maximum success from its various initiatives and plans.

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school generates a variety of data to help it to understand the performance and progress of its students. Data on academic achievement is collected at each marking period and reviewed comparatively by the principal and her administration and by teachers. The school concentrates on classes and cohorts but does not make sufficient use of diagnostic assessment to support its understanding of students' individual learning needs. Data on attendance and suspensions are carefully recorded and compared for trends term on term and year on year. The school has not been successful in reducing the number of suspensions, which continue at a very high level this year. The school analyzes and compares the performance and progress of all categories of student. It focuses particularly on improving the performance of English language learners and on graduation classes.

The school compares its progress against other similar schools and compares the progress of cohorts of students in subjects, grades and between classes. For example, English language learners make better progress than those in similar schools and the graduation rate for students at the school last year was higher than for similar schools. Data reveals marked differences in the performance of students between different classes in the same subject and continuing differences in the overall progress and performance of students between subjects. The school has not been fully successful in addressing the factors that contribute to these differences. However, where data for this year reveals students in graduating classes in danger of failing to make progress, action is taken. For example, the principal and assistant principals have identified a group of 90 students who

do not have the necessary credits to graduate. Each assistant principal has been allocated 10 of these students in order to monitor and track their progress to ensure, where possible, they meet graduation requirements.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient**

All goal setting is based on the analysis and review of data. The principal and assistant principals work collaboratively with faculties and subject teams to analyze data and set goals for the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). In a small number of subjects, goals are expressed in measurable terms but for most, they are not. The areas of the curriculum where success in the school is most noticeable are those where the analysis of data and subsequent goal setting are rigorous, for example, in mathematics and history. The goals of the school do focus appropriately on those students in greatest need. Students and parents are on the school leadership team and involved in setting and reviewing the goals and achievements of the school. In an effort to involve more parents in the life and work of the school, various activities have been developed by the parent coordinator and parents have been issued with a report card on their children for the first time.

Goals and plans drive the activity of the school, but success in achieving some goals, such as to improve the quality of instructional activity and student engagement in lessons, is very patchy. Expectations are not universally high. Teachers are not always willing to cooperate in the goals developed by the administration, for example, the 9th grade academy is a new initiative set up this year by the principal to improve the quality of teaching and learning for students. Teachers were not involved in the planning for this initiative and some have been resistant to the changes in scheduling and instructional organization arising from it. However, an early analysis of data on the performance of the 9th grade students suggests the academy is successful in bringing about improvements.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The school’s curriculum is fully aligned with the mandated curriculum and with the requirements for vocational courses. Regular assessments of progress provide interim data on the performance of students and this allows the administration and teachers to adjust and revise programs and schedules where necessary. All students study for Regents and technical majors and must qualify in both in order to graduate. This places considerable pressure on scheduling at an already overcrowded school and, as a result, the school has introduced a flexible day. Some students begin earlier than others and some finish later. The school offers an extended day for those students who need additional credits to complete their Regents examinations and this has had some success, particularly in improving outcomes for English language learners. In addition, the school offers self-contained and bilingual classes for English language learners, as well as Saturday morning classes. Data on progress and performance is shared with teachers. Most recognize their accountability for supporting the achievements of students both

personally and academically and particularly concentrate on preparing them for the Regents examinations.

The school budget funds additional classes and is used appropriately to support those students in greatest need, such as those who have made insufficient progress in English language arts. Staffing decisions are made with school priorities in mind. Scheduling decisions are based on the data kept on individual students, so that those who need additional classes take them. The 9th grade academy was introduced to enable block scheduling for the students in order to focus more closely on developing literacy skills. The quality of instruction across the school in all grades is inconsistent. Diagnostic assessments are not fully or consistently utilized to identify specific learning needs or to plan for differentiated instruction, resulting in teaching that does not engage and motivate students.

Although attendance is a high priority for the school and absences are carefully followed up, students regularly cut classes during the course of the day. This kind of absence is regularly monitored and recorded but it remains a persistent issue.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Since taking up post three years ago, the principal has selected several assistant principals to support her in the administration of the school. The assistant principals are energetic, but they do not yet work together coherently as a team and are inconsistent in the way in which they implement goals through their work with faculties and subjects. Some assistant principals work closely with teachers to monitor classroom practice and set targets for development, but this good practice is not undertaken by all assistant principals. In some cases, the assistant principals struggle to gain full cooperation from staff for new initiatives in instruction and learning.

Professional development is achieved largely through monthly faculty and subject conferences and by the assistant principals modeling teaching styles for others. This has been effective in raising the quality of planning and instructional activities in some subjects, but is slow to take effect in others. Assistant principals and the principal frequently observe lessons and teachers are encouraged to take part in inter-visitations. The school does not have coaches for English language arts and mathematics, but has recently appointed a specialist to work closely with teachers in the classroom on interactive approaches to teaching. The principal is a thoughtful and reflective leader and is respected by her staff. She has the capacity to effect change, but is under pressure from the long-term absence of two assistant principals. The school largely runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

The school aligns youth development and support services around its academic goals and has a number of initiatives to improve achievement through links with outside agencies and community partnerships. The extended day classes for students are taught by teachers at the school and these are reasonably well attended and effective. Other extended day programs, such as the Failure Free Reading class for English language learners, are poorly attended and the students gain relatively little from them as a result.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school's plans for improving students' academic achievements are regularly reviewed and revised against interim assessments of students' progress. Adjustments are made to bring about improvements, for example, the 9th grade academy. The school has worked hard and successfully to improve overall performance as measured by test and examination results, but has not yet tackled the inconsistencies in the quality of planning and teaching between classes in the same subject and between subjects. The school also works hard on monitoring daily attendance and has brought its attendance rate up as a result. It has not been successful in ensuring students attend all classes once they are in school.

The school goals contained in the Comprehensive Education Plan are based upon needs revealed by data analysis and review. In some areas, the goals are expressed in objectively measurable terms, facilitating periodic review and rigorous, effective implementation across classrooms. However, this practice is not universal. The monitoring undertaken by the assistant principals is not fully coherent or robust in supporting the school in implementing its goals and plans and while revisions and alignments are regular and flexible, they are not always properly coordinated to achieve maximum success.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: S. Gompers Career and Technical School (HS 655)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		X	

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.	X		
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.		X	
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.		X	
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.		X	
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.	X		
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.	X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	