



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Crotona Academy High School

High School 321

**639 Saint Ann's Avenue
Bronx
NY 10455**

Principal: Anthony Harris

Dates of review: April 7 - 8, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Terry Brown

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Crotona Academy High School is a high school with 144 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 47.2% Black, 51.3% Hispanic, 0% White, and 0.7% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 37% of the students enrolled and girls account for 63%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 62.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 65% eligibility.

The school is one of five alternative transfer high schools run on the Diploma Plus model, and takes students from Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn. The small campus comprises a number of modular units and a basketball court.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, and the staff, have a clear vision of what this school has to offer the students that transfer here, and of future developments.
- Previous and current data is analyzed and synthesized to articulate a thorough understanding of the performance and progress of each student.
- Budgeting, staffing, and in particular, scheduling, are thoughtfully made to provide the optimum environment to support academic progress.
- The school reinforces its exceptionally high expectations for academic progress and for behavior, from interview through to discharge.
- The school makes very good use of goals and interim checkpoints to help students succeed.
- A high level of mutual trust and respect characterizes the relationships between all members of the school community.
- Extended and incisive support for personal and social development comprehensively supports each student in achieving his or her goals.
- The school uses comprehensive and creative strategies to improve attendance and lateness.
- The flexible and innovative curriculum provides comprehensively for each student's needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction to enable them to broaden their classroom instruction strategies.
- Introduce structured and informal intervisitation to encourage teachers to learn from each other.
- Consult students about their learning to develop strategies to support them as self-directed learners.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The nature of the students and the small outdoor campus of this school, limit academic and other opportunities. However, the principal has taken a considered, systematic approach to developing the school, reflected in the strategies for student progress. In consultation with the staff, he sets year-end and interim goals, and frequently monitors them to inform necessary adjustments. A sound platform of effective procedures and good relationships form the basis for a focused attention to the generalities and detail of student data. The data informs budgeting, staffing and especially the teaching schedule. This successfully blends individual student needs and staff strengths to provide a structured, sequential road map to graduation. The school makes it clear that it has devised each student's program so that if they attend consistently and follow the guidance provided, they are likely to exceed their previously lower expectations. Many start at the school expecting to make no progress but leave having achieved sufficient credits or Regents passes.

The school provides integrated and focused professional development for teachers but there is insufficient intervisitation for them to learn from each other's good practice. The inquiry team is focusing on developing protocols for intervisitation that apply the outcomes of observing student learning to develop teacher practice. The school has not yet developed differentiated instruction well enough to support self-directed learning for all students.

The school has made considerable progress in each of the areas for improvement from the last Quality Review. The principal provides written feedback following classroom observations. The school has made considerable and successful efforts to improve student attendance. The agreed framework for instructional delivery is now in place and monitored frequently. The school provides each student with their own integrated plan with goals and interim checkpoints. The teachers are now using technology confidently, imaginatively and creatively.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school uses data very effectively to monitor student progress. The initial interview elicits information from the student and parents, by teachers, who are integral to the process, as well as by the administration. The school identifies students' needs and characteristics to ensure they are likely to take advantage of what it has to offer. The guidance counselor and principal analyze transcripts of previous high school performance, and diagnostic assessments in reading and math. This provides a thorough and meaningful indication of each student's credit accumulation and additional individual learning needs.

The administration and teachers attend to the needs of each student as an individual, taking into account any relevant factors, including ethnicity and gender. All staff, in particular the three with relevant training and experience, constantly monitor special education students with an individual education plan to ensure the fulfillment of mandates and to meet their needs. The school identifies its English language learners in August to provide appropriate scheduling with relevant language time and enrichment. Their progress towards proficiency is effectively fostered and monitored. To endeavor to create a gender balance, the guidance counselor will be attending a range of high school events to recruit more boys. The principal has instituted, and supported teachers in the use of, a range of data systems such as ARIS and Kaplan, to inform plans and track students. He synthesizes and articulates the data, to inform scheduling, teaching and relationships with students. As a result, the speed of credit accumulation and the number of students graduating has improved every year.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

All members of the school are fully aware that the school's goal is to provide the learning environment and support to enable every student to graduate if they are prepared to attend and put in the work required. The school articulates a focused individual analysis for each student of where they are, and the planned steps and timings required to reach this goal. All staff members are involved in their development and their regular and increasingly frequent assessment and adaptation.

Students and parents reflect that the site is not "an outdoor hangout camp", but an institution with high expectations, where attendance, appropriate behavior and diligence are all greatly valued and contribute to success. Pass rates have improved. Staff observations testify to changes in personal goals, increase in respect for other people, and a more positive self- image, which all affect academic progress. Ex-students, with previously limited academic expectations, are now attending college. The school provides students in the greatest need of academic intervention and credit accumulation with time, teacher and technological support, as well as substantial encouragement to make the most of the non-mandated opportunities. The school's efforts have increased parent involvement in the life of the school and with their children's academic progress. From the initial interview, through to the graduation ceremony, substantial communications contribute to this. The parents and the students appreciate the constant attention given to the dialogues about learning needs, capacities and short- and long-term goals, the plans made by the school, and actions required of the student to achieve them.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The principal carries out a thorough analysis of all data. This informs efficient and targeted scheduling to meet the needs of each individual student, and to provide a comprehensive program to fulfill Regents’ requirements. He schedules groups of students with similar credit accumulation to take classes together as much as possible, regardless of age. The school prioritizes the older students closest to graduation. If students do not pass, the principal quickly and constructively adapts their schedules to include extended day opportunities, before as well as after school, and concurrent options. The flexible, innovative curriculum meets standards and attends to students’ needs. Staff monitor progress carefully to consolidate learning and to reduce the opportunities to fail because skills are either missing or not mastered. Each schedule incorporates art, technology, and physical and health education. The school has purchased lab boxes for science, which have contributed to consecutive years of 100% pass rates. Teachers report that they receive everything they need to succeed.

The principal and staff consistently model a genuine trust and respect for each other, for students and parents, reflected in student behavior toward peers and adults. This forms the basis for positive, safe and inclusive, well-ordered and interesting classrooms. Teachers feel, and are held, accountable for their students’ progress. The differentiated scheduling provides the first layer of focus. The school deepens this by item analysis of assessments and day-to-day observations by the teacher. The data context and learning environment in the school is now set for teachers to extend their understanding and implementation of differentiated instruction. This includes setting different, appropriate tasks to individuals and groups in the classroom, consulting students about their learning styles, and fostering self-directed learning with the teacher as facilitator. These are not currently occurring in all classrooms and with all students.

The school has made considerable and successful efforts to improve attendance and reduce lateness. All teachers take responsibility for focusing on a number of identified students each week. The parent co-coordinator is persistent and creative in efforts to contact elusive parents. A variety of personal and social development, work related, and mentoring opportunities provide significant enticement for long-term absentees to re-integrate into school life.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The explicit focus on personal and social development is parallel and integral to the structured and sequenced approach to academic progress in this school. All staff are aware of, and sensitive to, how individual students’ personal circumstances affect their attendance and variable capacity to attend to their academic demands. Non-teaching staff provide constant and wide-ranging support for the students in their real lives, from individual counseling to finding financial aid. Teachers genuinely approach the

academic progress of their students in a holistic manner. The administration has given one teacher the responsibility to develop the advisory program to include a range of issues as well as goals and outcomes related to individuals, the peer group and the school. The students, and the parents, appreciate and respond well to the small school environment where adults know them well and give confidential attention to personal matters.

The administration makes professional development decisions seriously, based on a combination of issues highlighted by student data, and a needs assessment of staff learning. They created this structured, sequential, approach to ensure that teachers take ownership of, and internalize learning at an appropriate pace, to ensure implementation is effective. Formal observations elicit constructive and immediate written feedback. The administration makes frequent informal visits with a clear protocol and focus, and provides immediate professional development. Teachers respond well to the constant informal encouragement to improve their practice, and to responsibilities allocated when strengths and interests are noted. Open and reflective discussion occurs about teaching strategies and planning, but there are few opportunities for intervisitation to observe and learn from others' expertise. The one new teacher in the past two years while mentored externally, benefited greatly from the support and relationships built within the school. The school runs very smoothly with a flexible and appropriate response to the range of issues that arise. It deals with discipline incidents calmly, efficiently and constructively. A variety of outside entities broadens the experience of, and effectively supports the students, especially with future employment and academic considerations.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal, and consequently all staff, has a clear vision for the development of the school and its encouragement and support to make their students successful. The school's Comprehensive Education Plan has been adapted to address external factors. A systemic review of the effectiveness of the educational program has produced plans to continue the enhancement of teacher practice and the consequent performance of students. The principal has a very clear understanding of the nature of the students and the physical and learning environment required to enable them to reach their potential. Within funding constraints, he has plans to improve both steadily.

The school sets year-end and interim goals at the beginning of the year, both for teacher development and individual students, to be both challenging, and paced appropriately. It sets credit accumulation targets for each student, with interim goals related to a variety of assessments to monitor their progress throughout the year. The staff constantly reinforces the basic tenet that it is better to work in the present and to steadily accumulate credits, rather than trust in catching up at the end. Schedules, plans and goals are adapted immediately following the frequent assessments, and when deemed necessary, in response to observations and events. The school makes the decisions with full staff consultation in relation to each student's schedule and subject delivery.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Crotona Academy High School	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					X
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped