



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

School of Communication Technology

Middle School 339

**1600 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Jason Levy

Dates of review: May 27 - 28, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Christina Lewis

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School of Communication Technology is a middle school with 886 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 33% Black, 65% Hispanic and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 28% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 88%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 80% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school collects and analyzes a wide range of data to understand and meet the needs of students.
- Technology is used very effectively to enhance the curriculum and teaching and learning.
- The principal and his leadership team have a very clear vision for the future development of the school that is shared with the school community.
- Team and collaboration is a strong feature of the school that facilitates good planning and decision making.
- There are many good opportunities planned for professional development.
- Clear procedures enable the school to run smoothly and create a positive learning environment.
- Academic intervention and other support services are very effective in addressing students' social and emotional needs, as well as academic needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Disaggregate data in order to gain a clear overview of patterns and trends in the performance and progress of all subgroups as students move through the school.
- Raise staff confidence and expertise in the planning of differentiated activities to support and challenge the needs of all learners.
- Make explicit to students and their parents the small next steps needed to achieve identified interim and long-term goals.
- Extend the range of curriculum links by mapping skills across different subject areas and by creating assessment rubrics in science and social studies.
- Rigorously evaluate and review the school's work in order to refine practice and to prepare for the next stage of school improvement.
- Establish a calendar for interim assessments to ensure consistency throughout the school.

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 proficient.

The School of Communication Technology is a proficient school that has made good progress since the previous Quality Review. Teachers are more skilled in using data to understand the needs of students, and students are more involved in their learning due to effective planning based on the use of data. A major strength of the school is in the use of technology. It is utilized very effectively to enhance both teaching and learning. As a result, both students and staff are very comfortable and skillful in communicating through technology. This is due to the high quality professional development offered to staff. Students are confident and articulate about their work and are proud of their achievements. Lessons are usually engaging and support active learning, but are not always consistently planned with differentiated activities. Because of this students do not always make sufficient progress according to their need. The school has developed effective teacher assessments, and it is in the early stages of mapping skills across different subject areas. Through the introduction of SMART goals, goal setting has become established in the school's culture. However the school has yet to share, with students and families, the next steps needed to achieve interim and long-term goals.

The school's division into teams effectively supports the academic and personal growth of the students, alongside the good use of intervention and support services that are used in meeting social and emotional needs, as well as academic needs. As a result, students feel safe and their families feel supported. The inquiry team has made a positive start in targeting a low-achieving group of students in math. Results of the team's research have implications for the learning of all students and successful strategies are currently being trialed in preparation for a school-wide focus next year. . The principal and his team have a clear vision for the future development of the school that is shared by the school community. As a result the school has a real sense of purpose and a strong commitment to improving the learning for its students. However, the school has yet to fully evaluate and review the impact of its work this year to prepare for the next cycle of school improvement

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.

School leaders and faculty consistently gather, review and analyze a wide range of data to understand student performance. Baseline assessments are carried out in key skills

in writing and math on entry to the school. All of the information is available electronically. Comprehensive student spreadsheets include information not only on academic results, but also on attendance and other biographical information, all of which is shared with all staff. Consequently, staff across the school has a clear understanding of their students' achievements and instruction is planned accordingly.

As a barrier free school, there is a high proportion of students with diverse special needs. The appointment of a member of staff responsible for the development of individual education plans for these students has ensured a greater focus on meeting their needs. As a result, a number of students are integrated into mainstream lessons, while others thrive in collaborative team teaching classes. The high proportion of English language learners are equally well supported through bilingual classes or in small groups by specialist language teachers. As a result, interim data indicates that the lower achieving students in both of these groups have made good progress in English language arts this year. Currently the school has not fully disaggregated the data to compare the performance and progress of boys and girls. The school is developing assessments to track student progress over time based on prior achievement. The school has a good measurement of its performance when compared to similar schools and uses this as benchmark for its own performance.

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 proficient.

Goals are derived from the school's Comprehensive Education Plan and shared with the school community. These are translated into grade goals and from these teachers set SMART goals for all students. SMART goals include goals for student extension and intervention for low performing students. Staff and students use data to set goals for school improvement. However, this process is not consistent and the school has yet to share explicit next steps needed to achieve long-term goals with students and parents.

An effective range of academic support services and interventions are used in supporting students to achieve their goals. These include before and after school programs, in addition to small group intervention during the day. Students identified as at risk are equally well supported through targeted intervention. The inquiry team has successfully developed strategies to improve the performance of the lowest achieving group in math. Their intentions are to use successful strategies to benefit the whole school. The curriculum team meets with teachers to review progress towards achieving goals mid-year. Teamwork and very good collaboration is a prominent feature of school leaders and staff. As a result, student progress and achievement are regularly shared and discussed, although the review and update of goals are inconsistent. However, the school recognizes the importance of developing a school-wide calendar so that staff and students can monitor and amend goals regularly throughout the school year.

The work of the parent coordinator ensures that parents are given many opportunities to be involved in school life, including a range of workshops aimed at increasing their understanding of technology. As a result, parents value the high expectation the school has for their children and the wide variety of programs available to support learning. They particularly enjoyed the recent "Expo" open day where students displayed and presented aspects of their work.

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 proficient.

The school has developed a core curriculum that is very focused on the needs of its student population. It is constantly reviewed and adapted to ensure that the programs used are effective. Rubrics have been developed in English language arts and math to ensure a common consistency in expectation and assessment. Similar rubrics and skills mapping have yet to be developed in science and social studies. Up-to-the-minute, well-resourced technology provides stimulating learning experiences that enhance all curriculum areas. For example, students made recordings of their poetry on iPods and added sound effects. In addition, technology also provides facilities to engage students in homework, to communicate online with their teachers and, write "blogs" about their work. As a result, students enjoy their learning and are confident and articulate about their work.

The school also offers a good range of after-school activities that support students' development and include sports and art programs. Lessons are well planned with clear aims, but teachers have yet to consistently use the workshop approach and plan differentiated activities to meet the needs of all learners. As a result, the learning of lower achieving students is not always based on need, and therefore their progress is impeded. High achieving students are selected to attend an enrichment program in preparation for high school. However, the school has yet to establish enrichment and extensions programs for this group of students across all grades

The principal and leadership team work hard to ensure that respect and trust are highly valued qualities within the school. Consequently, they have successfully created a positive learning environment that encourages high expectations in all aspects of school life. Good strategies are in place to improve attendance and tardiness and these are beginning to take effect.

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 school has developed rigorous strategies for observing and monitoring teaching. This is done informally by walkthroughs and more formally by lesson observations with a specific focus. Teachers receive online feedback with suggestions on how to improve their teaching. They are also supported by team leaders in developing their teaching. This includes demo lessons, inter-visitations and collaborative time spent planning. Professional development is based on individual requirement as well as school need. Teachers share their experiences from external conferences so that all are involved in any new initiatives. An outside consultant is used very effectively to work alongside teachers and to support curriculum development, leading to improved skills and confidence in planning and instruction.

Regular surveys show the impact and success of school-wide professional development. A recent survey showed a great improvement in teachers' confidence in using

technology after such training. As a result, teachers feel valued and encouraged to do their best for the students. New teachers are also well supported through mentoring programs and help and support from colleagues.

The school makes very good use of guidance and other in-house support services to meet the social and emotional needs of students. In particular, the school has a strong partnership with an organization that supports the school in working with students and their families most at risk. The school has clear procedures to ensure it runs smoothly and student behavior is monitored closely. The school has recently introduced a rewards system where students can exchange tokens achieved for positive conduct at the school shop. Although in its early stages, this scheme is very popular with students and is already having positive impact on the learning environment. The school's innovative use of technology has created strong partnerships with external organizations that support and enhance the work of the school. The link with Office of Instructional Technology, for example, means the school is regularly used as a showcase for its use of up-to-date technology and practice.

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 proficient.

Team structure within the school encourages the ongoing monitoring and revision of teachers' SMART goals and student progress. A variety of formative and summative assessments, including national tests, school-based assessments and students' assessment portfolios, are collected and analyzed at regular intervals throughout the year. However, the school has yet to establish a more formal assessment timetable to ensure consistency throughout the school.

Progress is also discussed at team case conferences that include those staff responsible for the social and academic development of the students. As a result of these meetings, short- or long-term interventions and enrichment programs are planned and implemented in order that students are supported in their learning. This is through extra classes before and after school or extra support during the school day. Students who are at continued risk of under-achieving are referred to the instructional team, who then suggest different strategies and more focused intervention.

The principal and his team have in place a strategic five-year plan for school improvement that is monitored and revised regularly to ensure that the timeframes and targets are being met. However, they have yet to fully evaluate the impact and success of the 2007/08 actions in order to determine next steps for school improvement. The principal has a clear vision for the future development of the school and he has been proactive in uniting the school community and building a strong team capable of leading the members of the school community forward as, "Well-equipped learners of the 21st century."

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: School of Communication Technology	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