



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Samuel Gompers Career and Technical High
School**

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

Principal: Joyce Mills-Kittrell

Dates of review: November 29 – December 3, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Stephen Walker

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Samuel Gompers Career and Technical High School is a high school with 1,494 students from grade 5 through grade 12. The school population comprises 68% Hispanic, 28% Black, 4% Asian and 1% White students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 75% of the students enrolled and girls account for 25%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 77%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 85% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is effectively developing the use of assessment information to gain a good understanding of the performance and progress of students.
- Students who require additional help with their work are well supported by the academic intervention services.
- The specialist curriculum pathways provide unique career and technical opportunities for all students in preparation for college and employment.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities supports students well and adds considerable enjoyment to their school experience.
- The high degree of mutual respect between students and teachers leads to a very positive atmosphere in classrooms and around the school.
- There is a very good program of professional development that is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching.
- A well-organized system of supervision and security ensures that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.
- The principal provides supportive and collaborative leadership that is facilitating the considerable improvements in the school
- Effective partnerships with businesses and educational leaders provide additional resources and opportunities for the school.
- Teachers and administrators are using periodic assessments and whole school evaluations well to review plans and make the necessary adjustments.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop further the analysis of whole school performance and progress data with particular reference to differences between subjects, classes and similar schools.
- Encourage further instructional differentiation in classes so that teachers address more specifically the individual learning needs of each student.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more lessons fully motivate and engage the students.
- Develop a system of specific goal setting for students in all subjects and classes so that performance targets are based on prior attainment.
- Improve the student attendance at school and undertake a more detailed analysis of the attendance records.
- Ensure that agreed whole school priorities drive the departmental action plans.

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.

Samuel Gompers Career and Technical High School is an improving school with a clear vision to raise the number of students who meet graduation requirements. The principal provides supportive and collaborative leadership and is facilitating the considerable improvements in the school. The school is effectively developing the use of assessment information to gain a good understanding of the performance and progress of students. However, the school recognizes the need to analyze the data further with particular reference to differences between subjects, classes and similar schools. As yet, there is not a consistent system in place to set specific goals for students in all subjects and classes so that performance targets are based on prior attainment. Students who require additional help with their work are well supported by the academic intervention services. The specialist curriculum pathways provide unique career and technical opportunities for all students in preparation for college and employment. Most teaching is at least proficient and the assistant principals are supporting their teams so that more lessons fully motivate and engage the students. The school continues to encourage instructional differentiation in classes so that teachers address more specifically the individual learning needs of each student. There is a positive atmosphere in classrooms and around the school, which is due to the clear expectations in the school and the excellent systems of supervision. The school is continually seeking ways to improve further and uses assessment information to inform strategic planning. However, whole school priorities are not yet fully integrated into the departmental action plans.

The school's inquiry team is now in place and it is in the process of identifying the target group of students. Since the last Quality Review diagnostic testing now takes place in all subjects in order to identify the learning needs of the students. There is more consistency amongst the assistant principals in implementing initiatives and monitoring the quality of teaching. The cabinet meets regularly as a group and ensures that there is a consistency across the subject areas. School planning is now more effective with clear measurable goals within the Comprehensive Education Plan. The school is developing teachers' understanding of differentiation although this is still an area for development within some classrooms. Assistant principals are monitoring the quality of teaching and ensuring that support is in place to support improvements in teaching practice. Attendance of students is still a challenge for the school although cutting from classes and academic intervention has been reduced. There are now effective monitoring systems in place to monitor the absences from school although data is not yet fully analyzed.

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 proficient.

The school is developing the consistent use of assessment information to gain a good understanding of the performance and progress of students in each subject. There are an increasing number of students who are meeting the graduation requirements and progressing to college and employment. The principal analyzes the achievement data from the Department of Education, including the accountability and annual school reports, in order to track differences in student performance between subjects and teachers. The assistant principals discuss the scholarship mark analysis with each teacher and highlight underperformance or mark differences between classes. Teachers are then set performance goals for the year as part of their scholarship improvement plan. The school does not yet fully interrogate the assessment data with particular reference to the grade level differences between teachers and subjects. The school is broadly aware of the variations in student performance by gender or ethnic groups. The inquiry team identifies very specifically a largely male dominated group of underperforming students. The school does not fully compare its performance with similar schools although it is particularly interested in working with similar high schools that are successful in raising the achievement of the lower performing students. Well-developed systems are in place to record the performance and progress of English language learners and special education students. Not all teachers are fully confident in the use and analysis of assessment information. However, the inquiry team and the assistant principals are beginning to use data more effectively and are preparing to cascade the benefits of using ARIS to their colleagues.

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.

Teachers regularly use item analysis after each marking period to highlight areas of weakness among the students. The assistant principals review student progress at regular meetings with individual teachers. Information on the prior achievement of the students in their classes is not provided for teachers in all subjects at the beginning of the academic year so that they can set realistic goals and measure progress. Teachers encourage all students to succeed but students do not have specific goals that are based on prior achievement. Subject goals tend to be based on incremental progression rather than the actual ability and previous performance of the cohorts. Academic intervention services support students well who require additional help. The assistant principals are very effective in identifying and tracking students who are at risk of not meeting graduation requirements. Extra classes after school and on Saturday morning provide additional literacy help for English language learners. The school is particularly successful with the *Achieve Now* program for students who are held over in grade 9

which takes place in the evening. Over 60 students attend this alternative provision and many are reintegrated back into grade 11 after an intensive year at the academy. The school communicates well with parents and caregivers both in English and Spanish. The school posts report cards and progress reports to parents at least six times a year. Parents are alerted quickly if their child is having learning difficulties and requires intervention support. The majority of highlighted students attend the additional classes after a letter is sent home. Attendance rates at parent-teacher conferences are very low. Many parents, particularly the non English speaking Hispanic community, are not easily accessible. The school acknowledges that a significant challenge is to further develop the opportunities for more families to become fully involved in the learning of their children.

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 curriculum provides good assessment information on student progress towards the Regents examinations. There are opportunities for the higher achieving students to take advanced and honors placement courses. The specialist pathways provide a unique vocational element for all students in preparation for college and employment. Students take a specialist option of two periods per day from one of the distinct majors such as computer networking, electronic technician and pre-engineering. Each specialism leads to a nationally recognized qualification providing 'fast tracking' into college and employment. The wide range of enrichment activities supports students well and adds considerable enjoyment to their school experience. There are popular martial arts, dance and video clubs as well as the strong 'panther' basketball teams for both boys and girls. Although the majority of teaching is proficient, there is inconsistency in the quality of lessons. More imaginative lessons vary the learning activities so that there are opportunities for discussion, student thinking and problem solving. Students are generally well behaved and adopt a positive approach to their lessons. Teachers and students are increasingly using technology to support the learning process. However, some lessons do not fully motivate or engage the students. A challenge for the school is to raise the quality of teaching and learning across the school so that all students are fully engaged in their work. The school misses the opportunity to create a stimulating learning environment by using students' work in well presented displays.

Teachers are increasingly aware of the different learning needs within the classroom but do not make full use of data to differentiate instruction in order to address individual needs. The high degree of mutual respect between students and teachers leads to a very positive atmosphere around the school. Students confirm that "there is a wide range of staff who step up to help you when you need them." Students are encouraged to ask questions through student government meetings and this supports a feeling of openness and trust in the school. Student attendance is monitored well but is still too low. A significant number of students "drop out of the system" and attendance data is not fully analysed to highlight the scale of the problem and possible patterns and reasons for the absences.

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 comprehensive program of professional development is improving the quality of teaching. New teachers receive ongoing support through coaching and mentoring. Modelling of lessons and collaborative teaching provides good opportunities for teacher development. Assistant principals use the team meetings as opportunities for professional development. The school invests in the United Federation of Teachers' Center which is well used by the teachers. Additional staffing in the center offer individualized professional development for teachers. Teachers reflect on their current practice and identify their areas for development. There are regular "walkthroughs" by the cabinet team members and teachers adopt a very open approach to advice and support. The school is developing the use of inter-visitations with their teachers in order to share good classroom practice. The teachers' development day at Bear Mountain supports a collegial approach to staff development within the school. A well-organized system of supervision and security ensures that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The assistant principal of security works very effectively with the deans and security agents so that there are clear and reasonable expectations. The high degree of mutual respect between students and teachers leads to a very positive atmosphere in classrooms and around the school. The Advisory Board provides the school with excellent links with businesses such as Con Edison, IBM and Nebraskaland that provide additional resources and opportunities for the students. The Leadership Program also finances many of the extensive range of after school activities.

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.

The principal provides supportive and collaborative leadership and is facilitating the considerable improvements in the school. The assistant principals take part in the strategic planning within the school through regular cabinet meetings. The principal uses the "town hall meetings" to discuss issues with staff. There are clear plans for improving student graduation rates. There are agreed targets and success criteria within the Comprehensive Education Plan. Whole school priorities do not consistently occur in subject action plans. Teachers and administrators are using periodic assessments and whole school evaluations well to review plans and make the necessary adjustments. Teachers are using examination item analysis to highlight areas for development. Goals for teachers are not consistently explicit because individual students do not have specific target grades. Information from periodic assessments highlights any underperformance of students. Intervention strategies are quickly put in place to support those who are at risk of not meeting graduation requirements. The assistant principals and subject teachers regularly monitor intervention strategies in order to evaluate the effectiveness of support for students who are not reaching the required levels. Assistant principals review marking results and the consistency of examinations with their teachers. The school is continually evaluating its performance and seeking new ways to improve the learning and progress of the students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Samuel Gompers Career and Technical High School

Quality Score

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