



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Staten Island Technical High School

**High School 605
485 Clawson Street
Staten Island
NY 10306**

Principal: Vincent Maniscalco

Dates of review: October 31 – November 1, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Roger Fry

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Staten Island High School is a high school with 914 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 2% Black, 4% Hispanic, 74% White, and 20% Asian Pacific Islander students. The student body does not have any English language learners or special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance for the school year 2006-2007 was 98%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school has specialized high school status. Admission to the school is based solely on the specialized school admissions test, which is open to all 8th and 9th grade New York City students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principals have a clear vision for the development of the school which is supported through the visual arts initiative and other partnerships.
- The school uses data well to compare the academic, social and community efforts and ensure that scholarships are fairly distributed.
- There are key strengths in the curriculum, such as scientific research projects, robotics and biotechnology courses.
- The administration makes its expectations clear to staff, students and parents and evaluates the quality of instruction accurately.
- Teachers keep accurate assessments of what students know, understand and can do currently and of their past performances in subjects.
- Students enjoy school very much, respond very well to the demands made of them and particularly enjoy the range and quality of the after school clubs.
- The school runs smoothly because teachers are well inducted and trained and daily procedures are well known to staff and students.
- The school plans effectively to improve teacher outcomes.
- Parents strongly support the aims of the school and appreciate the staff's efforts to help their children and to involve parents in their children's education.
- Attendance is well above the City average for high schools as a result of students' great commitment to their education.

Areas for development

- Ensure staff receive the necessary training to use the new student achievement tracking system successfully.
- Develop the teaching so that students take a more active part in their learning.
- Continue the program of visits to other similar schools, to learn from their different ways of organizing learning.
- Continue to analyze student performances by class, gender, grade and ethnic group to establish trends and rectify differences.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Since the last review, the school has made good progress with establishing fair methods for gauging student progress through the use of the grading policy. The school has made some progress with meeting the target for greater student engagement in lessons. Teachers use extra questioning techniques to help students to think more critically. There has also been steady progress with distributing the leadership of the school. Committees of teachers meet regularly to make decisions and the three assistant principals are active in leading their sections of the school. The principal supports their work well.

The administration has provided clear guidance about how teachers' instructional goals should be presented. In most classrooms teachers record aims for lessons in the form of questions on the whiteboards, which help to focus students' attention on what is expected of them. The inquiry team has begun work using reliable data about student performance. Placement tests help teachers to find the right curriculum for each student in grade 9.

Student achievement is good because, for example, students and teachers share common goals. Students make the most of what they are offered and are very well focused on their personal goals. The administration's policy for making changes at a steady pace is working and students' results have steadily risen over the last few years. Aspects of the curriculum are high quality, because the staff have expertise and enthusiasm for their subjects, which rubs off on the students. Attendance is well above the city average because students find school life interesting. The school's inquiry team has begun work on using the new student achievement tracking system. Teachers have identified a group of students who are not performing as well as others for extra attention.

Some teaching allows students to be too passive and to not engage actively in lessons. Although students are clearly learning, they are not being well-prepared for the seminar approach in some subjects that will be expected of them at college. In the past, the school has made too few visits to other schools to see if any practices could benefit students at Staten Island Technical High School. Some departments look more closely at the patterns in students' performances than others. The school does not have a complete picture of whether any particular subgroup is performing better or worse, and why.

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.

Teachers use a wide range of tests and assessments to understand student performance. These include quizzes, marked assignments and portfolios of project work. Teachers have a clear understanding of the progress that individual students are making based on their past results. Students also understand what they are doing well and where they need to improve. The school has always identified individual students who are struggling, so that they get the help they need. Students commented that, "No one falls through the cracks." However, the analysis of students' performance on the basis of ethnicity and gender is inconsistent. Not all departments are looking to see if there are patterns in students' performance that the school can address collectively. The school has begun to use the latest ARIS data about students' results in State tests but this has not been disseminated to all staff.

Students score increasingly highly, and for most courses, they gain 90% or more. The inquiry team, using test data, has begun work on accelerating the progress of the students who are doing least well in grade 10. This is a cross-department initiative intended to focus more attention on those who are failing courses. The school has a very good method of comparing students' academic, social and community efforts based on a comprehensive data spreadsheet. The team responsible for recommending students for scholarships uses this data most effectively to make informed and fair recommendations.

The nature of the school means that there are very few schools similar to it. So, for the purposes of comparison, the school looks closely at how its own results have improved over the years and why. This process has ensured that achievement has risen year on year. The school is well aware that there are areas that it can improve. It has begun a program of visits to other schools of a broadly similar kind. However, the school has not done enough of this in the past, to see how the instruction in other schools meets students' needs and to learn from their experience.

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.

The administration sets a collaborative tone. Committees of teachers meet to discuss many aspects of student performance and the work of the school. Although decisions by committee take a little longer, processes observed were fair and thorough. The inquiry team discussed in detail the work of students in grade 10, based on accurate data about students' performances. This group of teachers set a goal to observe students who are not performing as well as others, check their engagement with their work in lessons, counsel them and then to help them through any difficulties that they are having.

Departments set broad goals for the performance of their students. It is an aspirational goal that all students will reach even higher standards than are present in the school at the moment and there is no doubt that students' performance has improved continuously over the past few years. However, the departments are less able to pinpoint precisely how they will achieve a particular percentage goal because goal setting is not commonly focused on such detail. The aspirations of the school are well known to parents and students, and there is a considerable sense of all moving in the same direction.

Students and teachers join together to set goals to reach their college choices. There is a close bond between student and teacher, which is highly constructive, particularly when they meet one-to-one to discuss progress so far with the courses that students are taking. Students realize that it is up to them as well as the teachers to ensure that meetings are worthwhile.

Prospective students and their parents receive clear messages from the principal about what the school stands for and whether the school is right for individual children. Students know their goals very clearly. Parents and the school work closely together. Very frequent informative report cards go home to parents so that they know very well how their children are performing.

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 has developed some helpful documentation to support the goal of using thinking skills increasingly in the teaching and learning process. This initiative is part of the continuing debate about the best ways to teach students in the school. The quality of the thinking skills that students use in lessons has improved since the last review, but some lessons still allow students to be too passive and not actively engaged in learning.

There are some key strengths in the curriculum. Each student learns Russian, as well as English and mathematics. Some of the research in the areas of chemistry and in the sciences generally is at a very high level. Students are proud of this and enjoy the challenge that the curriculum offers. A proportion of students learn in advanced groups that match their capabilities. There is limited use of small group work discussions within classes in some subjects, which places a limit on students' progress.

Senior staff hold teachers accountable for their work and they receive well-considered advice and support. The administration and teachers are well aware that the school must maintain high achievement, but that also it must embrace new styles of teaching when necessary to make the best use of initiatives that the school is planning. The school is engaged in a television studio initiative. The school intends that this media arts approach to learning will link together aspects of all subjects. Not all departments are ready to buy into this multidisciplinary approach to aspects of student learning.

The school has spent a lot of money on developing aspects of the engineering curriculum. The computer aided design lab is an impressive resource, which is used effectively to accelerate students' progress. Examples of work in portfolios show how the spending decision produces much worthwhile work. The atmosphere in the school

encourages high levels of student commitment. Students respond with attendance that is far above that in other high schools. Sixty percent of students have 100% attendance.

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 administration makes regular, frequent visits to classrooms to check on the instruction and learning. Teachers who need more support receive it. The reports that the administration writes on the teaching are helpful and are very well referenced to agreed criteria. The administration has begun to organize visits to other schools, so that teachers can see how classrooms are organized and bring back good ideas to improve the instruction. The school is self-critical and is willing to learn from experience.

Very helpful induction procedures are in place for inexperienced teachers or those new to the school. Guidance counseling for students is well organized. Those that need more counseling receive it. There is a relentless push on finding the right interventions to help students most in need with their problems. The school looks closely at the freshman year to make sure that all students establish successful routines. Students are carefully assessed when they arrive to make sure that the courses that they will attend are right for them. In this way, very few students leave the school before graduation.

The school runs smoothly because students truly want to be there and to make the most of all the opportunities it provides. The need for many rules and procedures is therefore reduced. The scheduling of lessons ensures that they have time for tutorials, after school activities, and can take part in all that the school offers. The school has numerous partnerships, such as a Russian exchange program and a link with a television company. A particular strength is that students are able to organize their own activities for the benefit of the whole student body and to the community. The principal surveys students and teachers regularly to find out what is working well and what is not. This provides good information that helps the school plan ahead successfully.

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.

Improvements in student achievement show that the school's planning process works because the planning sets measurable goals and specific timeframes. For example, the school has a target for students who have scores below 85% to catch up and exceed that figure. All teachers receive regular reports about their teaching. The good features of their work are recognized and areas for development discussed. Both aspects are reviewed in subsequent visits to lessons.

The school uses diagnostic testing to check on the breadth and depth of students' skills. Teachers are adept at looking at what students have got right or wrong, and re-teaching those aspects where students have struggled. When students join the school, teachers

check their knowledge and understanding. If there is a skill in writing or thinking which is not as advanced as it might be, extra attention is given to it in grade 9. Departments revise their plans periodically, based on how well students have performed on different courses. Changes have been made to aspects of the mathematics, Russian and science programs, in order to make the curriculum fit students' needs better.

The principal has a clear vision for the school. He asks his senior staff, "Where do you want to go?" All staff engage in this debate at different levels, conscious that the maintenance of the good achievement is paramount, but also that the current plans for improving the curriculum and the way that it is taught may offer many more benefits to students..

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME:	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?	*	*	*	*	*
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?	*	*	*	*	*
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 demanding, 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		

* The school does not have any students designated as English language learners or special education students.

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?					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?				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 make 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		