

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

DBN:	11X544
District Name:	District 11
School Name:	High School for Contemporary Arts
School Address:	800 East Gun Hill Road, Bronx, NY 10467
Principal:	Francisco Sanchez
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (Year-1) - Comprehensive
Areas of Identification:	English Language Arts- All Students; Hispanic Students; and Economically Disadvantaged Students
	Graduation Rate - All Students
Dates of On-site Review:	March 27-28, 2012

**PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT**

“The mission of this school is to provide for the success of our students. Students of today must be able to adjust to the rapidly changing technology and society that we live in. The High School for Contemporary Arts will use all the resources available to prepare students. Technology will be employed in all of the arts and academics to provide our students with the experience they need to be able to succeed in this technological world. Using the interest in the arts held by many of our students, the High School for Contemporary Arts will provide an environment where the arts will be used to develop our students' artistic abilities, academic achievement, and cultural empowerment.”

**PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS**

- The area that the school occupies in the Evander Childs campus is clean and well-maintained.
- The school is a supportive community atmosphere for both students and parents.

**PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA**

**FINDINGS:**

- Based on document review and interviews, the review team found that school leaders recognize the importance of data analysis and its use in raising student achievement. School leaders, staff and students have access to computer-based tools that store student data and various achievement scores. However, the review team found that there is limited evidence that teachers and staff use this data as a diagnostic tool to track achievement to ensure that student needs are identified and met before Regents exams are administered.

- There is limited evidence of subgroup data collection, analysis, and the monitoring of student progress. As a result, the review team found that there is limited evidence of the adjustment of teacher planning and instruction to meet the specific needs of the identified subgroups.
- Teachers generate a range of data through formal and informal assessments. However, the review team found that there is limited evidence that teachers use data to support their lesson planning or to track the progress of students through differentiated instruction. Therefore, few teachers differentiate student learning based on data findings.
- The school leadership and teachers report that large numbers of grade nine students enter the High School for Contemporary Arts at Level 1 and Level 2. Many of those interviewed indicated that students enter with deficiencies in learning skills; however, the review team found that there was limited evidence of a detailed analysis of data on these students or an evaluation of their specific needs. There is no program in place for students on their entry into the school to build upon students' prior knowledge and understanding or to improve on the skills necessary for successfully learning a high school curriculum.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- School leaders should provide PD in the use of 'Skedula' as an aid to data tracking and analysis and in how this information could be used as a diagnostic tool to track schoolwide student achievement. School leaders should ensure that all teachers understand and use this system for tracking student performance and to inform instruction prior to Regents testing. Teachers should record student formative achievement data so that individual, class, and subgroup data can be tracked each term to evaluate progress. This would allow teachers to plan lessons based on student need.
- School leaders should ensure that all staff has access to student performance data that allows analysis by subgroup. Teachers should be provided with professional development that assists them in using the data to inform planning and instruction and design lessons that meet the specific needs of students in the identified subgroups.
- School leaders should provide professional development (PD) for teachers in how to use data to track differentiated student progress, drive planning and instruction, and differentiate instructional practices to meet the individual needs of students.
- School leaders should ensure that they collect student performance data on all grade nine students who apply to enter the High School for Contemporary Arts. This data should be analyzed prior to the students' entry into the school in order to ensure that time is available to devise strategies and programs to address the learning deficiencies and individual needs of the students using a systematic and focused program of support.

## **II. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

#### **FINDINGS:**

- In classes observed by the review team, most students were passive learners. There was little evidence of student-to-student interaction. Few teachers used effective questioning techniques, encouraged higher order thinking, or used opened ended questioning. In nearly all lessons, students simply responded to factual questions that did not require critical thinking and analysis. Classroom observations by the review team revealed that most teachers either talked for most of the lesson or allowed students to talk among themselves in social groups with discussions often not related to the class lesson.
- In classes observed by the review team, the predominant method of teaching was teacher read-aloud. There was little evidence that students were reading assigned books independently without teacher read- aloud as support. Additionally, teachers often interpreted text during the read aloud without providing students with the opportunity to read and practice the interpretation of text, make critical judgments, or cite evidence that encouraged analytical thinking.
- Most teaching observed by the review team was based on the same activity and resources for all students. As a result, teachers were not differentiating their teaching. There was limited evidence of teachers addressing the specific learning needs of individual students. Lesson planning appeared to be based on uniform tasks to be completed by students.
- Teachers have begun the process of developing ELA curriculum maps. The maps include titles and themes for units that are not aligned with New York State Standards (NYSS). The units include a final product; however, the review team found that there is little evidence that they contain schoolwide explicit teaching points or strategies that are aligned with the P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- Classroom observations by the review team found that, in many cases, lesson objectives did not provide connections to prior teaching and few students were able to articulate any lesson objectives.
- ‘Do Now’ activities, when observed by the review team, were not completed timely and did not maximize instructional time. Additionally, the review team found that ‘Do Now’ activities were often not directly aligned with teaching objectives.
- The review team found limited evidence of a consistent schoolwide grading policy. All teachers are expected to mark and grade student work; however, the criteria varies considerably among departments. In some cases, students received detailed feedback on their work, with comments on how to improve it; Frequently, however, student work contained little more than two words and a check mark or no feedback with a numerical or letter grade, making it difficult to track the consistency of student progress over time. Rubrics were used by some teachers as a grading tool rather than with students as partners in learning the criteria for improving their work.
- Lesson observations by the review team revealed little use of technology, although most classrooms had TV/DVD equipment. No computers were observed being used by students, although students’ work on display showed some computer use. The school has a large number of laptops available for

student use, and classrooms have SMARTBoards, although few SMARTBoards were in use. Those that were in use were being used as projection screens.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Students should be provided with structured learning opportunities to share their thinking and interact with other students. Teachers should identify and organize student groups for team work and collaborative learning. School leaders should provide teachers with PD that supports them in developing a variety of questioning techniques that challenge students' ability to implement critical thinking and problem solving. School leaders should encourage teachers to promote active learning by getting students to work in pairs and groups and pair share so that teachers have time to check for understanding and increase the demands on students to be directly involved in their own learning.
- Students should be provided with appropriately leveled reading material that is on their instructional reading level, giving them the opportunity to read assigned texts independently in order to develop fluency and comprehension. This practice will facilitate students' ability to interpret texts by using high order critical analysis.
- The school leader should provide PD opportunities in differentiation. This will help to ensure that differentiated strategies are incorporated into teachers' daily planning and instruction. The school leaders should also evaluate the level of instructional differentiation implemented by all teachers through informal and formal observations and provide additional training for those teachers who need it.
- The school should continue the work started in developing standards-based curriculum maps that are aligned with the CCLS. The school leaders should monitor to ensure that unit topics are directly linked to the CCLS and contain schoolwide explicit teaching points and strategies.
- The school leaders should provide PD to all teachers to make certain that all lessons establish connections to prior learning and set a purpose for learning. Lesson objectives should be clearly stated and discussed with students throughout the lesson so they understand what they are learning. School leaders should monitor this practice by the frequent review of teacher lesson plans and provide frequent feedback to teachers to improve their instructional planning.
- School leaders should provide teachers with PD on effective pacing of lessons to maximize instructional time. Additionally, 'Do Now' activities should be purposeful, directly related to the lesson objectives, completed within a timely manner, and not take time away from the actual lesson.
- The school should adopt a consistent grading policy across all departments so all student work is assessed using the same benchmarks. These data can be recorded in a consistent manner to compare progress within a subject as well as across other subjects. All teachers should begin to use the CCLS as a starting point for constructing rubrics. Teacher feedback to students should contain specifics on skills mastered and steps for improving the quality of their work.

- School leaders should investigate the use of appropriate technology that can be integrated into the curriculum and develop and implement a comprehensive technology plan to ensure that teaching and student experiences reflect the school's mission. School leaders should monitor technology usage through observations and walkthroughs.

### III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

#### FINDINGS:

- The review team's review of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) found that the goals set for the school are unclear, often without measurable outcomes or clear strategies for implementation.
- The school leader reported to the review team that he is presently the campus manager and is responsible for managing campus safety issues for the entire campus. These campus management responsibilities often take time away from the school leader to address the management and leadership demands in his school.
- Based on a review of documentation and interviews, the review team found that the school leaders visit classrooms regularly and engage in informal instructional walkthroughs. However, teachers are not provided with written feedback and next steps for improving instructional practice. Specific whole school professional development (PD) needs are not identified as a result of these informal evaluations. Additionally, the criteria used for evaluating teaching and learning vary among school leaders. Teachers report that they receive written feedback from formal lesson observations; however, these observations do not always provide uniform, clear, and specific feedback for instructional improvement.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leader, with the support of the School Leadership Team (SLT), should develop measurable CEP goals and action plans with benchmarks that clearly define a strategic plan to improve achievement in ELA. The school leaders, in collaboration with the SLT, should periodically evaluate the school's success in its mission and goals for student success. The school leader should seek assistance from the Network to help evaluate the previous year's goals and identify what needs to be further accomplished as well as set new targets for the upcoming year. The measurable goals and strategies of the CEP should be shared and understood by all staff.
- The school leaders, in association with other school leaders of schools on the Evander Childs Campus, should consider ways of reducing the burden and time commitment required of the school leader to manage the whole campus. The school leaders should consider sharing the responsibility for maintaining the quality of the environment and addressing campus safety issues. The school leaders might explore the possibility of appointing co-campus managers or other solutions that release the school leader of the High School for Contemporary Arts from being the sole safety manager.

- School leaders should develop a plan for regular, frequent informal walkthroughs that result in structured, specific feedback and data that will drive instruction and improve student outcomes. School leaders should ensure that they all use the same criteria for evaluating the quality of teaching. Based on formal and informal observations, school leaders should provide teachers with written feedback utilizing specific and consistent criteria that include next steps for improving instructional practice and student learning. This information should also be used to develop a teacher's personal PD plan as well as to inform a comprehensive whole school PD plan.

#### IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

##### FINDINGS:

- Teachers indicated to the review team that the current credit recovery process is not effective. A review of documentation and interviews reveal that Credit Recovery and Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are not distinguishable as two separate programs and both terms are used interchangeably. Credit recovery programs occur afterschool, on Saturdays, and during a summer instructional program. There was limited evidence that teachers use student performance data to track student progress, or to identify and support at-risk students. Often they wait until students fail and then enroll them in Credit Recovery programs rather than provide early intervention or AIS to support student success. Therefore, teachers and other staff are not identifying at-risk students who are in danger of failing and providing them with appropriate support.
- School leaders indicated to the review team that they track attendance for individual students and provide the attendance personnel with up-to-date information on student attendance. The attendance staff subsequently follows up on students with high absenteeism. However, a review of data shows that the effectiveness of this approach is limited because the attendance officer has a caseload of five schools.
- Student lateness to school in the morning is a concern. First period is scheduled to start at 7:59 A.M., but the review team found that there is a steady stream of students filing into school until at least 8:20 a.m., with several students arriving well past this time. As a result, many lessons do not begin until 8:30 a.m. Observations of classes during the first period by the review team showed as much as 50 percent absenteeism based on the number of students on the school register for those classes.
- Based on interviews and a review of documents, the review team found there is no formal pupil personnel team to discuss the academic needs and interventions required to support at-risk students. Various staff often work individually on different elements of student support services, all of which may affect the level of academic achievement of students. The review team found that there is limited documentation regarding academic, social, and emotional interventions for at-risk students.
- Parents and students indicated to the review team that apart from 'Talent Evenings' there are few opportunities for students to engage in the contemporary arts. Therefore, there are limited drama activities, theater productions, exhibitions of dance, music performances, and student art exhibitions. Students are offered few trips that connect with the school's mission to enrich the lives

of the students and provide them with social-emotional support. As a result, parents and students indicated that this lack of arts-related enrichment opportunities does not satisfy the objectives articulated in the school's mission.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The school leaders should ensure that the Credit Recovery program and AIS programs are separate and distinct programs that focus on the objectives for each. The school leaders need to develop an effective system to identify at-risk students and implement AIS with fidelity. Student performance data should be used to track students' achievements so that early intervention may occur.
- School leaders should seek guidance and support from the NYCDOE's Office of Youth and Family Services to develop strategies for improving attendance that have proven to be successful in similar schools. School leaders should consider an action research approach involving representatives from the school community to explore the elements that affect attendance and work to develop and implement strategies for improvement. Campus leaders should also review budgetary resources to determine if attendance staff can be increased.
- The school leaders should research successful best practices in other similar schools and develop a plan for integrating effective strategies for improving student tardiness. In addition, the school leaders should ensure that the plan clearly outlines the school's lateness policies and procedures. Teachers, parents, and students should know and understand the school's policy on lateness.
- School leaders should consider creating a formal and structured pupil personnel team that brings together different skills, knowledge and understanding about a student and therefore improves the likelihood of solving problems faced by students. Additionally, school leaders should ensure that a policy of recordkeeping is instituted for use by all relevant staff. School pupil personnel staff should be able to access written information to ensure that they can plan appropriate interventions based on the needs of the student. A set of Response to Intervention (RTI) protocols should be put in place.
- The school should seek to expand its offerings of contemporary arts activities. School leaders should work to develop more connections with theaters, the music industry, dance and art beyond the immediate school environment. Additionally, school leaders should identify places of interest that students might visit to enrich their lives and studies.

#### **V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

##### **FINDINGS:**

- Based on interviews and a review of documents, the review team found that in the 2011-12 school year an Australian United States Services in Education (AUSSIE) consultant for ELA and social studies provides professional development. Separately, another consultant provides PD for mathematics and science. The AUSSIE ELA consultant meets weekly with teachers of English language arts. However, observation and interviews by the review team with teachers revealed limited evidence

that the content of the observed ELA department meetings was aligned with specific teaching or lesson observations and findings.

- A review of documentation and interviews by the review team indicates that there is no schoolwide PD plan, and few teachers and school leaders participate in external PD opportunities. Additionally, little evidence was found that school leaders ensure that the available PD is planned and effectively used to bring about improvement in student achievement. Therefore, there is no formal identification of individual teacher or department needs as part of a focused and comprehensive plan.
- Teachers indicate that PD is based principally on mandated requirements, along with specific interests brought to the attention of the school leader. The review team found that there is limited evidence of an assessment of teachers' professional development needs or an evaluation of the school's annual CEP goals to inform professional development. As a result, PD is not targeted to addressing the specific needs of teachers.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- School leaders should monitor the quality of the support provided to teachers by outside consultants to ensure that it is followed up by PD that improves instruction. A formative and summative evaluation plan related to data based teacher needs should also be implemented to determine the effectiveness of the training being offered.
- The school leaders should develop a comprehensive PD plan as part of the CEP that addresses the school's goals and targets the needs of teachers to improve their delivery of instruction. PD providers should be identified and included in the plan. School leaders should ensure adherence to implementation of the plan and evaluate it for effectiveness.
- School leaders should use teacher surveys and observations to identify the specific needs of teachers, help them create specific PD-related instructional goals, and then provide opportunities for teachers to attend PD sessions and inter-visitations.

## **VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES**

#### **FINDINGS:**

- Based on classroom visits, the review team found that classrooms are generally well stocked with textbooks, and some classrooms have a collection of fiction books. However, the review team found that many classrooms have insufficient fiction and nonfiction books to support learning. Additionally, English language arts (ELA) classrooms contain class sets of novels for instructional reading; however, there are few examples of well-stocked classroom libraries that contain multiple titles for independent reading. Literary texts observed in some classes were not grade appropriate. Students stated that they read the same book in prior grades. Some indicated they read the selections two or three times.

- The review team found that the room designated as the campus library is currently closed for student and staff use. The space has no books, but contains a large number of computers. The inability of students and teachers to access this space limits the ability to reinforce reading and research skills for all students.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- School leaders should consider ways to improve the number and range of books in classrooms to enrich students' learning. Class libraries need to be specific to the subject being taught, be grade appropriate, and include both fiction and nonfiction books. Students should be able to borrow books and have access to sufficient numbers of books and titles that are on the students' independent reading levels. Organizing classroom libraries in this way will allow students to build vocabulary and concept formation, reading fluency, and comprehension.
- The school leader should work with other school leaders across the campus to ensure that the library becomes accessible and is used as an instructional resource for all the teachers and students in the building.

#### **PART 4: CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

The School Quality Review Team would like to recognize the school's efforts in completing the SQR documents and flexibility during the visit. The school's hospitality is appreciated by the SQR Team. The findings and recommendations noted in the report are intended to guide the school's inquiry, planning and the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) for the school year 2012-13. The school should also continue its efforts in the implementation of the following Regents Reform Agenda initiatives: P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for grades 9-12, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.