



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Halsey Middle School

Intermediate School 296

**125 Covert Street
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Ms Maria Barretto

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Reviewer: Chris Andrews

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Halsey School is an intermediate school with 782 students enrolled from grade 6 through 8. The school's population is made up of 53% Hispanic and 47% Black students. Special education students account for 9.2% of the school population and there are 11% English language learners. The school receives Title 1 funding for 84% of its students, which is higher than similar and City schools. The average attendance at nearly 90% is comparable to similar and City schools.

The building is large with classrooms for each teacher, but there are no dedicated science laboratories, although the school has set out a room to be used solely for this purpose. However it lacks the facilities which allow students to practice science labs effectively.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school generates a wide range of data and this is used effectively by all teachers to accelerate students' progress.
- There are whole school goals within the Comprehensive Education Plan, reflected within departments' action plans.
- Support for students in the greatest need of improvement is excellent.
- The advisory program and the associated Prevention Week provide excellent support for student social development.
- The deployment of resources is well aligned to the needs identified by data and resources are targeted effectively to secure student progress.
- Instructional programs engage the students who enjoy work and are actively involved in their own learning.
- Relationships within the school are good, and students feel safe and able to bring any problems to an adult in the school.
- The principal is dynamic, well respected and has demonstrated the capacity to manage change.
- Professional development is very well aligned to the needs of the curriculum and the teachers, and is strongly supported by the work of the coaches.
- Partnerships with community-based organizations reinforce the achievement of school goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Make better use of data relating to gender and Introduce strategies designed to focus on boys' learning styles, so as to enable boys to make faster progress.
- Further develop the planning cycle to ensure that all teachers feel involved in the process beyond their contribution to needs analysis.
- Develop further strategies to involve more parents in the education of their children.
- Provide formal opportunities for teachers to make inter-visitations to each other's classrooms and to be involved in peer and self evaluation.
- Ensure the planning process includes interim benchmarks for each objective and clear time frames for the evaluation of progress.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features

The Halsey School is organized into four academies, each led by an assistant principal who also leads one or more of the content areas. By adopting this form of organization the principal has an administration which can comment meaningfully on student progress across the whole school and in all subject areas. The weekly academy instructional meetings provide a forum for frank and candid discussions, and give the principal additional insights beyond those she collects on her daily walkthroughs and informal observations.

The students at the school enter with low levels of performance and self-esteem. Many are up to three years below grade level in reading and struggle to access the curriculum. The program focused around the advisory session aims to target that sense of failure and this begins with 'Prevention Week' where there is an intensive period of teaching values. Positive behavior, self-esteem, built through attention to health and hygiene, and character development form the core of this work. The success of this program has reduced the suspension rate but more significantly has earned the school recognition, and it will be leading a first City-wide 'Prevention week' conference in the near future. Parents recognize that the school is changing for the better and largely credit the principal with this change. The school understands its strengths and areas for development well.

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 student progress over time.

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

The school generates a wide range of data for all its teachers and this has a real impact on students' progress, with improvements in test scores in mathematics and English language arts across the school and significant improvements in many of the subgroups within the school. The principal and her team of assistant principals expect to see the use of this data in class. The New York State tests provide clear item analysis to inform about the students' strengths and areas of need. Princeton interim assessments provide on-going assessments as well as tracking progression. Teachers provide plans for each student with indications of intended interventions, and so have a plan for each class and for each student identified as a 'struggling student', in a format which is consistent across the school. Special education students and English language learners are particularly well assessed, and the data is well collated among teachers and paraprofessionals. Programs such as Great Leaps and the Wilson program are in place and appropriately used. Data shows that, as a result, students catch up in reading on average a year and a half of the three years they lag behind on entry. The Adelante after-school program and the technology-based English Language Learning Information System (ELLIS) provide excellent diagnostic and support tools for the English language learners. The school is aware of the significant differences in performance by gender but has yet to address this beyond separate advisory classes or different clubs and assemblies for boys and girls. Study groups are reviewing research, but strategies designed to focus on the significant

gender difference in terms of scores, so as to enable boys to make faster progress, have yet to be implemented. The school consistently reviews its progress against its past performance and against similar schools. The principal networks with several local schools which have similar populations, and inter-visitations have been made to observe alternative strategies for securing student progress.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient with well-developed features.

There are whole school goals within the Comprehensive Education Plan and these are reflected within departments’ action plans. As a result there is a clear framework within which grade and departmental teams can function. However, there are some inconsistencies in the degree to which the different departments share the setting of goals so not all teachers feel involved in the planning process beyond providing a needs analysis. There is however, good collaborative planning within the departments. For example, every student who is currently a high achieving level 2 is identified to all teachers and given additional support from contracted former teachers. These students thus both reach the grade level they require, and also help meet a central whole school goal.

Support for students in the greatest need of improvement is excellent, and movement within the different groups occurs after assessment periods. The New York City English Second Language Assessment Tests show that English language learners make good progress and this progress is enhanced by the use of the ELLIS program. Expectations of students are high, and they are able to explain what is expected of them, not only in terms of general behavior and study habits, but also in terms of their individual progress. The expectations are shared with parents at the orientation meeting for 6th graders and through a range of communications and meetings. However, the school recognizes the need to involve more parents in the education of their children and is continually seeking for new ways to encourage that involvement. In terms of social development the advisory program and the Prevention Week associated with it provide excellent support for students, with a resulting marked improvement in behavior over the past three years.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

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

Each department maps its curriculum in order to drive instruction and to provide data to measure the progress being made by students. Planning is cross-curricular and all departments deliver aspects of literacy, so that students have the maximum exposure to key skills through different content areas. They are supported by the lead English teacher and the coaches to ensure standards are maintained, but social studies delivers narrative accounts, science delivers reports and mathematics supports the writing of narrative procedures. Teachers and the administration are all very clear as to their accountability, but it is recognized that differentiation remains an area for further development and is a main school goal in the Comprehensive Education Plan.

The use of staff and resources is well aligned to meet needs identified by the data and resources are targeted to secure student progress. The introduction of the Adelante program and the employment of new bi-lingual teachers stemmed directly from the principal's analysis of data and observation of teaching. This analysis also provided the focus for scheduling different student groups for mathematics and English language arts. An increased spend on special education reflects a similar analysis. The impact on the English language learners has already been marked, with students making rapid progress in their time at the school, as measured by the State tests.

Instructional programs really engage the students; they especially enjoy group working, for example for the English language arts author study, or 'hands on' activities in social studies and mathematics. They feel that their teachers want them to succeed and will guide them with specific ideas on how to improve, such as the inclusion of more detail in persuasive writing. Relationships within the school between students and adults are excellent. Students feel safe and able to bring any problems to an adult in the school. The data shows an improvement in attendance, which is a high priority in the school. The principal has a detailed strategy, both to encourage attendance and to challenge absence. Certificates, 'pizza parties' and membership of certain clubs provide the rewards while there is a clear escalation of school actions to respond to differing levels of absence.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

The potential of an individual to set high expectations for the students is a key focus in the selection of new staff. The principal then holds an eight day summer institute for new teachers to provide a range of professional development, and the interpretation of data is among the areas for training. Professional development is very well aligned to the needs of the curriculum and of teachers. In meeting these differing needs the support from the coaches is much appreciated, but the principal ensures that English language learner and special education teachers also have an input into the development of their general education colleagues. This has often been in-class support from these specialists when a teacher is developing a new skill or trying a new idea.

Inter-visitations are usually informal, and based upon a specific teacher's need, and the school recognizes that the provision of additional opportunities to allow teachers to make more inter-visitations to each other's classrooms would be beneficial. A further perceived area for development is in the area of formal peer- and self-evaluation. Candid discussions about comparative student progress and evaluation of results take place at team meetings and at the academic instructional meeting, but peer evaluations of teaching are less common.

The principal is dynamic, well respected and has demonstrated the capacity to manage change for the well-being of the school and its students. The school runs very smoothly, and all members of the community are aware of the systems and procedures. Partnerships with community based organizations, such as the Ridgewood Beacon and STEP programs reinforce the attainment of goals in respect of student progress and personal development. To ensure this, the principal meets regularly with representatives of the different groups to discuss the progress her students are making.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school sets its goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan after a series of reviews of data and progress against the previous year's plan. The Plan is organized effectively, but only those teachers with a direct input into the creation of the document feel they have a real understanding of it. To monitor the school's progress towards its wider goals in terms of the alignment of instruction and leadership, an external group from America's Choice carries out an annual assessment which feeds into the Comprehensive Education Plan planning process. This evaluation occurs in March at the start of the next cycle of planning, but there is a limited sense of when and by whom interim monitoring takes place. The administration recognizes that the attainment of goals could be facilitated by ensuring that in future planning there are interim benchmarks for each objective and clear time frames for the evaluation of progress towards these objectives.

The goals set in the Comprehensive Education Plan are measurable and realistic, but also challenging in terms of student progress. They are reflected in the departmental plans and it is expected that these are updated after each set of interim assessments. The principal reviews student portfolios of work to monitor improvement over time. The school, through the academies and the departments, has a sound overview of students' strengths and areas for development, but there is some inconsistency across these teams in the degree of sharing and review. Discussion in the grade and team meetings does however focus strongly on the needs of students who are struggling and students and parents agree that the teachers know students' individual needs very well as a result of the school's processes.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Halsey School (IS 296)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	