



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Canarsie High School

High School 500

**1600 Rockaway Parkway
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: David Harris

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Reviewer: Martyn Groucutt

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

This is a large Brooklyn high school with over 2,900 students enrolled in grades 9 through 12. Currently 85% of the students are Black and a further 11% are Hispanic. Although it appears that only 20% of students are Title 1 eligible, the reality is that the school gets back very few application forms from parents who are eligible to apply. There are 10% special education students and 4% English language learners. A significant proportion of students have a previous record of low achievement. School attendance at 71.3% is very low and well below that of similar and City schools

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- There is clear and effective leadership from the principal, who is well supported by his team of assistant principals.
- It has very recently developed an in-house system that produces immediate reports on the achievements and progress of every individual student.
- The school leadership has created an environment in which students say they feel safe and where they can learn in class.
- The new development of creating model classrooms increases the opportunities for staff to see effective instruction.
- The development of a school library containing up-to-date, relevant books and information supports opportunities for individual learning.
- The Student Transitional Employability Program (STEP) is a good example of the school meeting the needs of specific, targeted students.
- New programs, such as Global Kids, have the capacity to make a positive impact in students' lives.
- The wide range of clubs, activities and extension programs that take place at the end of the school day enhance the quality of education.
- The excellent sports facilities are put to full use during and after the school day.

What the school needs to improve

- Gather an appropriate range of data on the performance of groups of students and use it to plan effectively to meet their needs.
- Develop the use of data in order to understand what every individual student knows and is able to do, and to monitor progress over time.
- Increase the use of differentiated instruction across the curriculum to improve achievement.
- Continue and build on current efforts to improve attendance.
- Increase the use of technology in classes as a tool for independent work and for reinforcing learning.
- Strengthen opportunities for teachers to observe best practice, both within and beyond the school.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school, with some proficient features.

Since the arrival of the current principal, great strides have been made towards creating a learning environment that is calm and well ordered. In this work he has been effectively supported by the team of assistant principals. The additional resources available to develop a safer environment are reflected in the progress that has been made. Students appreciate the improvements to their school.

The primary need is for the school is to improve its use of data in order to better understand individual students' achievement. This is the biggest single factor that stops the school receiving an overall judgment of proficient. The school is poised to consolidate improvements through a greater concentration on the use of data to improve instruction for groups of students and for individuals. There are big challenges ahead to raise standards in a school characterized by the number of low achieving students. Developing the use of data has not featured highly enough in its list of priorities in the past. This is now changing, with one of the assistant principals taking lead responsibility for the development of effective data use. There is good potential for improving instruction and raising achievement in the future.

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 undeveloped.

Until recently, the school has not placed a focus on the analysis of data to review its performance in comparison with similar and City-wide schools. It has also made little effective use of available data to analyze the relative performance of groups within the school. This has contributed to the history of low achievement, as without this information the school was unable to plan effectively to address the differing needs of groups represented in the school.

There are now examples of the analysis of the performance of individual students being introduced. English language arts teachers analyzed weaknesses in the results of individual students in the recently published State tests. Similarly, the science faculty now displays individual results from lab work on its bulletin board, which is proving to be a focus for engaging students' attention and involving them more in assessing their own performance. The use of portfolios as a means of collecting reliable evidence of the progress of individual students is also developing. This is more effective in some subjects than others. A good start has been made in developing a range of effective strategies, though much is too recent to be considered fully integrated into whole school practice. Departments do not yet consistently use the analyses of their findings to target effective teaching strategies.

The assistant principal with responsibility for developing the use of data is aware of the task ahead and has recently introduced positive developments. Progress has been made in introducing an in-house computer program that enables teachers to print out a report on every individual student, showing progress over time, patterns of attendance and other relevant information. The school is aware of the need to extend the use of data more widely among staff and is taking rigorous steps to address the issue. It is at an early stage in this process, and the understanding among staff of how this can help them in their work with students is not consistent across the school.

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.

School organization is heavily focused on individual subjects, which limits whole school analysis of issues concerned with student performance across the curriculum. However, within this framework there is evidence of teachers working together in teams and beginning to use students’ achievement data as it becomes available to improve their planning. The school’s Comprehensive Education Plan gives good examples of measurable goals for student outcomes. The assistant principals use the scholarship report, which shows how individual students performed, to work with staff in looking at strengths and areas for improvement.

The weakness in data gathering limits the ability for instructional activity to accelerate learning for classes and individuals. The school does not know enough about students’ academic needs and progress over time. It is unlikely that rates of graduation will improve until greater attention is paid to the needs of individual students through a close analysis of each one’s areas of strength and weakness. Some aspects, such as the graduation rate of special education students, which fell by 30% in the last published figures, require urgent attention. It is in this area where the school has instituted a good example of focused support for identified need. The STEP program is successful in providing effective preparation for employment for some of the many students who have been held over several times and who are still attending school.

The school acknowledges that the lack of accurate data on students’ achievement has meant that interventions to support those students needing most academic help have not been well targeted. This lack of data has also meant that some students have been misplaced in classes and therefore are attempting work which is either too easy or too difficult. In both cases, students’ motivation has suffered. The school’s newly emerging systems are beginning to tackle these areas, but it is too soon to see the impact on students’ motivation and progress.

A good library has been developed to support individual work, although there is only just sufficient material available for the many students who are reading at below grade expectation. Capacity to support individuals extends beyond the classroom in other ways, such as the student intervention team that supports students at risk from self-harm. There are also good links with other agencies which support students’ families.

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 undeveloped.

The curriculum is mainly determined by the State and City testing requirements. In some content areas, there has not been flexibility to adopt courses which are more appropriate for the needs of the students, based on teachers' knowledge of their students. In addition, departments work a great deal in isolation from one another, and there is very little linking of content areas to reinforce basic literacy and numeracy skills. There is a wide range of sporting activities, clubs and additional support for learning that takes place after school. Some of these are broadening the perspectives of the students and engaging those who participate very effectively. A program that introduces students to robotics is a good example of a club that excites students, as is Global Kids, a program designed to increase engagement and attendance.

Students say that while they sometimes use computers for individual work, such as those in the library, they rarely use them in their normal classes. This means that an effective tool, which might allow the strongest academically to extend their learning through individual challenge and support the least academic students through reinforcement exercises, is not fully utilized.

Some departments have begun to analyze results of internal and external tests to have a more accurate picture of the areas needing improvement, but there is little use of this information to compare the performance of students across teaching groups and so determine the effectiveness of individual teachers. There is little evidence of differentiated activities in class. Instruction tends to be based around whole class activities. Consequently, some students find the work too easy, while others struggle to complete a task or even to take part in the class.

Because previously there was little analysis of the performance of students, decisions about priorities for the use of resources have not been clearly based on student need. This is beginning to change, for example by the appointment of an assistant principal with responsibility for promoting the use of data across the school and investment in new technology to track student progress and achievement. There remains more to be done in aligning these decisions more precisely to improving student achievement.

There has been clear improvement in student engagement since the appointment of the current principal. This provides an increased capacity for learning, which will be heightened as the use of student data becomes more sophisticated and teachers receive the quality of information that will enable them to take account of individual needs. Improved student engagement has been a major step in enabling the school to move forward.

Poor attendance remains a major issue despite the efforts of the specially designated student and staff support team that works hard to improve attendance. Many students are held back by their failure to attend school regularly. At the very low level of 69% during the week prior to the review, there is an urgent need to improve the situation.

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 proficient.

The principal provides clear, focused and very effective leadership. He is widely respected throughout the school, both by staff and students. He is well supported by the cabinet of assistant principals who are beginning to work together to improve the school. They have had major success in bringing about a school which is calm and classrooms which are, on the whole, orderly. The school works satisfactorily with a range of partners, particularly services which support students' academic and social needs.

Work is becoming more focused on individual students' progress and several initiatives recently introduced have begun to carry this forward. There is a lot of distributed leadership in this large school. While this model provides a faculty focus, it has limited the impact of whole school curriculum planning and activity.

The principal and assistant principals undertake regular classroom observations and provide effective feedback to help teachers improve their instruction. This is also used as a way of defining areas for individual professional learning. The development of the model classrooms is beginning to provide opportunities for teachers to observe good instruction and to improve their own practice. However, teachers rarely have the chance to observe best practice in other departments or schools. The teacher center provides a good facility for professional learning. It has professional leadership and effectively supports the assistant principals who identify needs within their own departments.

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 undeveloped.

The school is developing systems to evaluate students' progress throughout the year and to identify individual needs. These systems have the potential to help teachers maximize individual students' performance. However, it is work in progress and some of the initiatives are too recent to have made any significant impact upon whole school practice or student outcomes. The fact that the school's Comprehensive Education Plan identifies the need for major and sustained professional development to support teachers in using data to drive instruction is a reflection of the priority the school is now giving to this issue.

Although the Comprehensive Education Plan is explicit about the need for improvement, for example 'ongoing and sustained professional development...providing targeted training for using data to drive instruction' its use as a tool to guide improvement is limited. There are some measurable targets for improvement in student achievement, but overall the plan does not set out interim goals with timescales to help staff to measure progress towards their achievement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Canarsie High School (HS 500)	∅	✓	+
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		