



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

High School for Civil Rights

High School 504

400 Pennsylvania Avenue

Brooklyn

NY 11207

Principal: Michael Steele

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Reviewer: George Wallace

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The High School for Civil Rights opened in September 2004 and has 292 students in grades 9 through 11, and the first grade 12 cohort to graduate will be in the summer of 2008. The school occupies part of one floor of a building which houses five High Schools in total. The current principal has been in post since September 2006 and is the third principal in as many years.

The ethnic make up of students is: 79% Black, 19% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% other. 2% of the students are English language learners, and 13% are special education students. The school receives Title 1 funding with over 60% of students eligible. This is above the average for similar and City wide schools.

Attendance over recent years has risen to date is currently running at 77% which is below the average for similar and City wide schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has a strong and relevant mission statement.
- The principal and assistant principal visit lessons frequently and their reports are evaluative.
- Students who are in particular need of support receive additional programs to aid their learning.
- The school runs smoothly, and students like their school and feel they are well supported by staff.
- Scheduling decisions work in the best interests of students and where additional support is required, either for advanced or special education students, it is provided immediately.
- Staff know and respects students and will go out of their way to provide extra support and time to talk with their students.
- Attendance is improving.
- There is a very good link with the YMCA which has a positive impact on students' lives at school.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the ways in which data is collated and ensure that it is interrogated, analyzed and used to drive both teaching and other aspects of school life.
- Increase the range of strategies to raise attendance.
- Develop ways to include staff in the process of school improvement planning and goal setting so that there is a feeling of strong partnership and commitment to the development of the school through the repeated use of a working school improvement plan.
- Improve the quality of differentiation in teaching.
- Ensure that professional development is the product of close analysis of the needs of the school as identified through the goals set in the school improvement plan.
- Ensure that the goals in all aspects of the school's improvement plan show interim points for evaluation so that the progress towards reaching each target is monitored.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school.

The High School for Civil Rights, while undeveloped, is an improving school. The new mission statement is precise and concise, and provides a good message for the development of the school. The school runs smoothly, but too many students are absent or arrive late. Those who are in frequent attendance indicate that they like their school and that staff will go out of their way to provide extra support and time to talk with them. Staff know and respect students. Those students who are at risk receive extra support. Students also know that this school is good at ensuring the curriculum meets their needs. When specific requirements arise the principal ensures that extra support or more effective programs of study are put in place immediately.

Teachers are using a wide range of different methods to collect student performance data and use it to track student progress. However, little detailed analysis occurs, whether at class, grade or whole school levels. Therefore the school principal does not use data with staff to set demanding goals for either immediate or long-term improvement. Hence, few plans exist beyond lesson and course plans for guiding thinking about school and subject improvement. Despite this, the curriculum is proficient and teaching generally engages students, but there is much to do to improve teamwork and some aspects of teaching, for example, with regard to differentiation. Attendance is a high priority but is too low.

Systems for hiring staff are new. Professional development has a focus on school needs as identified by the principal and has begun to secure improvements. However, the professional development plan is not especially linked to any whole school improvement plan. The principal and assistant principal frequently observe lessons and their reports are evaluative. The principal has the capacity to effect change and knows that there is much to do to improve the school, including developing much more collaborative work and teamwork to drive improvement. There are no systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the school's work. However, revisions to the school program do occur but on an ad hoc basis in response to perceived needs.

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.

The principal receives print outs of school data and knows the position of each student in relation to their scores and credits towards their Regents Diploma and graduation. This data is used to ensure students follow the right courses. Where extra revision courses or advanced courses are required, these are set up. Although knowledge of individual student achievement is good, data analysis to understand achievement across grades and the whole school is undeveloped. Good knowledge of individual students allows teachers to assist where difficulties in learning have arisen.

While achievement of special education students is well known and their progress towards their individual plans monitored, there are very few other areas in which such monitoring and evaluation of the progress of other students occurs. The principal discusses progress of English language learners with appropriate teachers, but there is no evidence that any specific issues or developments arise from such conversations.

Teachers know the achievements of their students. This performance data is used to inform their planning. However, the administration does not confirm whether student progress is great enough. There are no common methods of collecting and analyzing data. Information, whether similar schools comparisons, lesson observation outcomes or specific student performance data is rarely analyzed. Therefore the generation of various questions arising from the measurement of student progress or performance rarely occurs.

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 undeveloped.

The principal has set out his vision and shared his mission for the school with staff. However, the collaborative processes necessary to translate this into strong school development are in their infancy. There is no working development plan. However, the principal knows the direction in which he wishes to move the school. His priorities since taking up the position of principal have been about ensuring the school runs smoothly and calmly, and that classroom management and issues about teaching are addressed. In view of the school having no agreed plan or any specific objectively measurable goals, any focus on students is very much that undertaken by individual staff, including the principal. At grade level there is some assessment of where students are in relation to their credits for graduation. Teachers also analyze data on the basis of their classes, so where misunderstanding of a particular topic occurs; it is recognized and taught again.

The school responds positively to students at risk. Teachers ensure that specific intervention strategies are discussed and employed where necessary. In addition, at a care and welfare level, the school employs the services of the YMCA to undertake advisory and counseling services for students. Some teachers convey high expectations to students. Equally, some parents share in the importance of high expectations for their sons or daughters. However, there is not a consistent approach to ensure that students uniformly respond to the raising of their aspirations which helps to allow for expectations to rise. Specific written goals and plans do not drive the work of the school. There is some understanding of the key issues driving school development, but there is no concerted team approach working in partnership to ensure school improvement.

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 proficient.

The curriculum meets the mandated requirements. There is attention to the civil rights theme contained within the name of the school, however, this has waned and the principal recognizes that it needs to be developed. A representative from the YMCA works effectively with students on personal, social and community issues. The curriculum also

includes health education for grade 11, law and mock courtroom activities and some students are actively engaged in a citywide Robotics competition.

The quality of teaching, including classroom management has been a priority of the principal since early in this school year. Teachers recognize that they are accountable for the quality of learning and to some extent the degree of success of students. They plan much of their work based on the outcomes of assessments made, and therefore there is a strong understanding of individual student needs. However, overall planning for and delivery of teaching rarely ensures that work is matched directly to the needs of students or groups of students. Teachers also recognize that they have some responsibility for students' personal development, but this does not extend to the advisory work which is carried out by a person from the YMCA. Budgeting decisions help to ensure that the school operates smoothly, but there are some gaps in staffing, for example, school deans, systematic use of coaches or school counselors. Scheduling decisions are accurate and meet the needs of students. Additionally the school is particularly good at responding to needs such as the importance of setting up advanced Regents courses where required as well as preparation classes for those students having difficulties with their studies.

The quality of teaching varies across the school from that which engages to students to that which does not. The principal is acutely aware of the need to develop teaching across the school using the expertise in and beyond school. Staff know and respect students, and on the basis of their data analysis and qualities as teachers will spend much additional time talking with and supporting students. Students have adults they can turn to in the event of concerns. Attendance is improving, but remains very low. Attendance is a high priority, but the systems currently in place are having an insufficient impact to reduce absenteeism and lateness.

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 undeveloped.

The hiring procedures are clear in the mind of the principal; however, the procedures are in their infancy. There is an anticipation to hire teachers who have high expectations of students. The principal looks for teachers who have a proven record in motivating students so they want to learn and to enjoy their learning as participants rather than recipients. The professional development program started this year has a focus on classroom management skills. It is evident from the principal's monitoring, which is thorough and provides useful feedback to staff, that too many teachers are not using the models preferred by the principal and developed during the professional development session earlier in the year. It is through the principal's observations of lessons that the current program of professional development arose. There is no specific use of data as yet to drive aspects of the professional development program nor overtly designed to aid collaboration with peers in the pursuit of the school's goals.

Some planning takes place in teams especially that connected with specific topics within the curriculum and a goal of the principal's is to generate much more collaborative teamwork. The principal runs the school with a small cabinet of senior staff, but the assistant principal shares her time between two schools in the same building. As such, the amount of time available to the principal for data analysis and planning with his senior team is constrained. The principal is respected and it is felt that he is having a positive impact on the quality of life in the school. He has effected change for the better, but there is much to do in terms of analyzing data and other information, identifying goals, and then

devising and implementing plans. The school runs reasonably smoothly, however, lateness causing disruption to teaching and other students' learning. The school has one major external partner and this works extremely well, but those relating to law and other aspects of school life are undeveloped.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan is not a working document, and no other working plan has been written and presented to staff. Therefore, it is rare for an interim evaluation to occur. The process of self-evaluation is not in place.

Several teachers compare the achievements of individual students in their class, and where improvements are required teachers spend time to help students gain the knowledge and understanding necessary to succeed. Where such efforts require further support, teachers engage the support of intervention programs and encourage students to attend after school classes and Saturday school. Diagnostic assessments are used by teachers to inform them of the success or otherwise of teaching specific topics or of difficulties individual students are facing with specific tasks. However, there is little diagnostic assessment or analysis of data across the school as a whole and there is no whole school analysis of statistics. To date, the school has not analyzed its own data and other information in a systematic way to help inform future planning for the school. However, the current principal recognizes the need to reflect on the outcomes of the past year to help generate a whole school plan.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: High School for Civil Rights (PS 504)	∅	✓	+
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		