



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Pacific High School**

**High School 520**

**112 Schermerhorn Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11201**

**Principal: Carmen Walston**

**Dates of review: May 15 - 16, 2007**

**Reviewer: Frank Jones**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Pacific High School has 308 enrolled students from grade 9 through 12. Eighty-three percent are Black, 16.5% are Hispanic, 2% are White and the remainder comes from an Asian background. The school population includes 7% special education students and 1% English language learners.

The school is a transfer alternative high school and serves students aged 17 to 21 years. Its declared intention is to enable all students to graduate. The school receives Title 1 funding with 61% of students eligible, which is above similar and City schools. Attendance figures for 2005 were 67.8%, which is lower than both similar and other New York City schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is well respected by the school community and committed to providing the best opportunities for all students.
- The recently hired assistant principal has already made a significant impact and valuable contribution to the development of the school.
- Students are driven in their desire to graduate and consequently are attentive and work hard to enable this to become a reality.
- The school displays great sensitivity and concern for fragile and vulnerable students.
- The outreach program is instrumental in ensuring good attendance and support for students that enables them to receive a continuous education.
- Students benefit from the variety of the curriculum offered and the additional opportunities to access vocational and other training outside the school.
- Parents welcome the open door access to the principal and staff and value the exceptionally high level of communication, which keeps them informed and confident in the ability of the school to support them and the students.
- The school has benefited from improvements in the quality and appropriateness of professional development.

### What the school needs to improve

- Improve the collection and analysis of data
- Improve teachers' understanding of the potential and use of data.
- Implement individual learning programs for students that clearly identify goals and the incremental learning steps required to achieve them.
- Plan and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- Constantly evaluate the impact of plans and strategies on student outcomes and use this information to further drive up achievement.
- Analyze in more depth data relating to ethnicity.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is an undeveloped school with proficient features.**

Students in Pacific High School display an extremely high level of commitment to learning, often in very difficult personal circumstances. There is a tacit realization that this may be the last opportunity to secure an education with attendant qualifications and both students and parents do not want to see it wasted. Teachers work hard to meet the students' needs and the level of understanding, effort and care displayed by them is high. However, the impact of these efforts is not maximized because too little attention is focused on what each student needs to learn if they are going to meet with success. The program of work and activities is clearly mapped out following orientation on entry and takes in to account each student's circumstance and aptitude. The absence of individualized plans identifying incremental learning steps militates against success.

The principal is well respected by the community. The assistant principal has made a significant impact in a short time, including the introduction of relevant professional development and a common understanding of what is required for staff to work in a cohesive fashion. The school plans an innovative curriculum and draws on support from other agencies and institutions to ensure appropriate and, where possible, vocational provision is available to all students whatever their ability or circumstance. This flexibility and desire for students to succeed underpins the future development of the school.

### 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 proficient.**

The school gathers a wide range of qualitative data, which is analyzed and used well to identify and meet needs of individual students. Quantifiable data relies heavily on City information to identify what each student knows and can do. This is supplemented by an orientation day followed by diagnostic testing which gives a more detailed picture of student abilities. This information is instrumental in identifying appropriate class placement, subjects and electives to be followed by each student and to realign the curriculum to meet learning needs and where appropriate provide intervention and enrichment strategies. The school has a clear picture of the performance of each student, including special education students and English language learners, enabling it to map out a program and timescale that will enable each student to graduate.

Achievement and progress made by students are identified at each marking period and item analysis provides information of gaps in knowledge that are subsequently addressed. Grade books are used to record on going assessment of progress and achievement. This and the other available data are not used effectively by all staff to identify the next steps in learning and can have a detrimental effect on progress for some students. A grade adviser monitors progress and where students are perceived to be in danger of underachieving then intervention occurs. One area of focus has been to develop the use and understanding of the potential of data amongst staff, a significant proportion of whom are very experienced.

Data analysis of subgroups has identified that the levels of graduation among boys is significantly higher than girls. Subsequently, the school has successfully focused on the female population to remove barriers that reduce access to education. Analysis of data relating to ethnicity is less well developed and the school recognizes the need to explore this area further. The school monitors its progress against similar schools and the principal 'borrows' best practice to enhance the teaching and learning at Pacific High 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 undeveloped.**

The school sets broad goals for students and departments similarly have their own long-term plans encapsulated in the Comprehensive Education Plan. The overriding goal for all students is that they acquire enough credits to graduate. The school or departments plan for but do not as yet set quantifiable goals based on concrete data to forecast credit accumulation in subjects or electives. The positive patterns of improvement are evident in the rising trend of passing in the Regents exams over the last three years and records of achievement but are not used sufficiently to set challenging goals.

The student-specific entry data gathered by the school is used to identify a curricular and elective pathway that is time limited and will enable a student to gain enough credits to graduate. A guidance team who sets short-term goals for each student carefully monitors the progress against each subject. Where student progress suggests that they may not achieve the required credits, intervention occurs and a revised program is developed to support graduation probability.

Teachers make insufficient use of the information they receive following marking periods to devise individual student programs designed to eradicate skill deficits to enable more rapid progress to occur. The assessment that takes place clearly indicates student achievement and progress, but it is not effectively used across the school to identify the next steps in learning. There is a tendency to deliver the curriculum rather than focusing on what skills and knowledge each student needs to be successful. The leadership team has recognized that this is an issue and has begun to meet with teachers on a regular basis to discuss progress of individual students and pass rates in each department. Goal setting has recently been introduced at whole school level, but is still undeveloped.

Students are driven in their desire to graduate and consequently are attentive and work hard to enable this to become a reality. They are highly self-motivated and consider that most staff have high expectations of and for them. Parents welcome the open door access to the principal and staff, valuing the exceptionally high level of communication, which keeps them informed and confident in the ability of the school to support both them and the students.

**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 purpose and nature of the school dictate that the school has to be innovative in its approach to designing a curriculum that meets the individual needs of students and achieves its primary aim of student graduation. The school is successful in this aim and supplements the mandated curriculum with a series of credit-bearing electives that include journalism, computer art and desktop publishing. These take place at lunchtime and Saturdays as well as during normal school sessions. Wherever possible, vocational programs and other educational institutions provide a variety of opportunities to meet the identified social and academic needs of the students.

The students are extremely self-motivated and this results in high levels of attention and application in lessons. The instruction lacks differentiation in most cases and does not take in to account the incremental learning needs of students. In these cases, engagement becomes more passive for some students and the pace of progress and achievement is reduced. The recently hired assistant principal recognizes this and engages in discussions with teachers to develop instruction. The principal is clear about the improvements required in the school and targets the budget well to support learning. The purchase of smartboards and other technology is part of a successfully planned program to provide curricula access and raise achievement. The school is effective in providing appropriate programs for students, but the ability to utilize a range of teachers is limited by the number of instructors available.

The school is flexible in its response to need and has successfully made alternative provision, including part-time access to other colleges thus enabling students to continue their education and the opportunity to graduate. The sensitive level of care and concern shown for all students, especially the fragile and vulnerable, is a well-developed feature of the school.

The level of commitment and dedication displayed by the majority of staff is high. The students recognize this and feel confident that they can talk in confidence with teachers in time of need. Relationships are good and a climate of mutual support is evident throughout the school. Attendance is seen as key to graduation and detailed data is well used to monitor and encourage participation in school. Personal intervention by the leadership team and effective systems including home visits and rewards reflect the importance the school places on attendance.

**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.**

Given the need to cover all credit-bearing subjects and the size of the school, the key requirement for hiring is subject knowledge coupled with a commitment to the students. The school has met with some success in this area. The recently hired assistant principal has already made a significant impact and valuable contribution to the development of the school. The principal and assistant principal both work closely with staff to support their planning and instruction. Teachers, who are frequently the only member of the department, welcome the use of subject instructional support specialists from the region to work alongside them to plan and deliver the curriculum, as this dialogue is not readily

available within school. This additional support not only impacts positively on practice but also reduces the feeling of isolation that can be prevalent in small departments.

The leadership team engages in regular observations and, where there is prior notification and support for planning prior to the observation, teachers view this as a positive learning experience. Teachers are less comfortable with 'walk through' observations when there is no follow up discussion. Professional development follows and recently intervisitations with other schools have been introduced with an extremely positive reaction from those who have experienced them to date. Teachers implement training incrementally alongside new initiatives to support their acceptance and impact. The introduction of increased technology is following this model of professional support.

Despite the school operating without one assistant principal, it runs smoothly on a daily basis and is highly responsive to demanding situations that arise with students often created outside the school's control or influence. The current leadership team have the ability to maintain improvement and this is evidenced by the new initiatives in professional development and the more focused developmental lesson observations. Students benefit from a comprehensive program that is instrumental in ensuring support and enables them to receive a continuous education. The principal is well respected by parents and students who report that she is committed to providing the best opportunities for all. Productive liaisons with other community-based services such as the Cooperative Technical High School serve to enrich and support the educational experiences of the students.

**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.**

Long-term goals are developed and discussed by the school cabinet and contained in the Comprehensive Education Plan. They clearly identify the key development issues but lack quantifiable data to accurately measure progress made towards achieving them. The cabinet meets to discuss what progress has been made, but these decisions lack depth of rigour and lines of accountability. Plans are in place for each department that, although useful for considering the needs of the department, do not reflect student achievement. The leadership team takes responsibility for monitoring progress.

There is a high focus on the academic and social needs of each student. There are no plans in place that identify individual learning programs, but the school is responsive to individual need. Close monitoring of achievement indicates the likely success within a subject or elective area. The curriculum is flexible enough to make alterations to ensure that provision is added to or altered to ensure that each student gains sufficient credits to graduate.

The orientation day and initial diagnostic testing provides measurable data on the students' abilities specifically in mathematics and reading. This data and the qualitative social information are used as a basis for revising an appropriate program including academic subjects and electives that will secure sufficient credits for each student to graduate. Out of necessity these are time scaled to enable students to graduate within the period permitted according to each student's age on entry. The school is highly mindful of these constraints and where required, provides alternative opportunities and enrichment activities to enable the goal of graduation to be achieved. Where possible, electives are linked to vocational training to increase the potential for employment.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Pacific High School (HS 520)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>	X		

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>	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"> <li>ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>			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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>	X		

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	