



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**William H. Maxwell Career and Technical High
School**

**High School 660
145 Pennsylvania Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Zipora Steiner

**Dates of review: May 7 - 9, 2007
Reviewer: Corinne Brown, Nick Butt**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The W. H. Maxwell Career and Technical Education High School, High School 660, is located in the East New York area of Brooklyn and serves a student population of 1128 in grades 9 through 12. Of these students the majority, approximately 70%, are from Black backgrounds, which is higher than similar and City schools, while 30% are of Hispanic backgrounds. The remaining students are of Asian (2%), or White and other backgrounds (1%). Approximately 5% of students are identified as English language learners and approximately 18% as special education students, which is higher than in similar and City schools. There are approximately twice as many female than male students. Attendance is currently between 72% - 74%, which is lower than similar and City schools. This is a Title 1 school.

Following restructuring two years ago, the school is now made up of five small learning communities. The Maxwell Academy comprises students from the 9th grade and also students from the Late Day Academy. The other four small learning communities are based on vocational choice and cover Appearance Enhancement, Apparel Technology Design, Health Careers and Communications Media. The principal has been in post for two years, but has been working in the school for many years.

The building is utilized in general so that each small learning community is located on a different floor, with additional intervention services and special education suites mainly on the fifth floor.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The small learning community structure gives students the opportunity to identify with the school and make personal connections.
- The principal leads with calm authority and empowers staff.
- The principal has built an enthusiastic administration that works cohesively; staff hold a shared vision for their work and believe in their students.
- The dedicated staff work hard together to support student outcomes.
- The school collects and analyzes data to understand performance.
- The school has embedded extensive professional development into its planning.
- The Late Day Academy and Living for Young Families through Education (LYFE) center offer special opportunities to meet identified needs.
- The vocational programs that supplement the academic curriculum, include internships and some New York certification, these motivate students.
- The school provides a safe, orderly environment with clear rules and responsibilities.
- Students like the school and feel comfortable.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure consistency in data gathering, recording methods and analysis across the school.
- Ensure all teacher planning consistently meets different needs of students, including higher achievers, through differentiated activities.
- Identify actions needed to achieve planning goals, and the small steps that will demonstrate progress within agreed timescales, in all school planning.
- Intensify the reward system for attendance and offer role models with quicker recognition for all achievement.
- Refine curriculum planning so that skills learned in one area drive specific elements in another area and are mapped.
- Examine further avenues to involve the wider community in school life and ensure increased parental involvement.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Since the appointment of the current principal and school restructuring, the staff at W. H. Maxwell Career and Technical Education High School are working together to improve student outcomes through the five small learning communities. They are establishing a reputation as a safe environment in which to gain vocational academic accreditation. Staff have an understanding of the local area and its issues, so the school now offers a variety of support services, both academic and social. There are clear referral ladders for behavior and attendance with inbuilt rewards, in addition to extra-curricular activities. There are, for example, clubs for drama, dance and drumming, and sports such as baseball and basketball, which aim to capture student interest, utilize community expertise and offer positive recreational opportunities for students. Students who have been at the school for several years appreciate many aspects that have improved; the supportive relationship with teachers, and the improvements in behavior through tighter structures. As the school continues in its new incarnation, it is building capacity to utilize data to improve student outcomes through more rigorous and consistent practice across all small learning communities, while retaining the personalized focus on achievement.

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 collects and collates data from a variety of sources to understand student and school performance, and so plan instructional programs. Significant data from the City and from within the school, such as credit accumulation, is entered onto a database which was written for the school. This means it is able to collate information from multiple sources and sort by their chosen category. Performance by class, subject area, grade and small learning community is examined to observe trends and implement action accordingly. Data for each student in a cohort aids assessment of needs with a graduation plan given to student and parents. Guidance counselors for each small learning community (SLC) track student progress each semester and check that each student's transcript is accurate. The school aims to micro-manage students so that they are treated as individuals.

Data regarding ethnicity and gender is also considered, as well as that for groups such as special education students, English language learners, those who might be at risk due to social circumstances and young mothers. For example, data shows that females outperform males in Regents examinations in mathematics and science, so this is being addressed. Teachers are responsible for sending marks and grade information for their classes to be inputted on the database. Some teachers use technology to assist in their analysis, but this is not consistent practice.

Comprehensive incident reports identify patterns and inform action, so behavior in hallways has improved significantly as a result. Data on attendance, punctuality and

cutting classes is available daily, and analyzed by class and teacher, as well as individual student. The school examines current data but also looks at its data for the last three years to notice patterns or trends. It compares itself with schools which have similar issues, such as attendance, and has made links to share strategies.

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.

The school works on different levels to utilize data in planning. At administration and cabinet level, whole school and small learning community goals are set, with input from constituents as appropriate. The restructure plan, for example, was led by a redesign team, including school leadership and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) representative, who in turn consulted with others in the school community. The result is a synthesis of all constituents’ input, so they have ownership. The recent whole school Comprehensive Education Plan Addendum was also a collaborative community document.

Staff in the school are dedicated and work hard together to support student outcomes. Weekly meetings of the cabinet, content area study groups and monthly department conferences are used to collectively plan, revise and examine the impact of instruction. Each small learning community meets to look at overall performance, but also focus on individual performance through case studies using data. This means that student support and attendance issues are regularly addressed. The six marking periods in the year mean that a systematic review of scholarship grades occurs.

Interdisciplinary teamwork and creative planning is increasingly happening, which leads to skill reinforcement and greater student motivation and impacts on achievement. The school is aware of the need to refine and formalize curriculum planning so that skills learned in one area drive specific elements in another area and are mapped.

The school has identified particular needs among certain student groups and as a result has established a Living for Young Families through Education (LYFE) center, with childcare facilities. The Late Day Academy offers high maintenance students, for example those with ongoing behavior and attendance issues, a structured environment to establish good habits and work focus, prior to reintegration into the mainstream setting. Both initiatives prove to be effective for many targeted students.

The school has high expectations for its students and exposes them to a variety of experiences outside school to raise aspirations. It has an open door policy and welcomes parental involvement, but this is less than it would wish, partly due to social circumstances. The school wishes to explore further avenues to involve the wider community in school life and so ensure increased parental involvement and improved student attendance.

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 school aligns its curriculum with State standards and has chosen to adopt the balanced literacy and mathematics models. The vocational programs which supplement the academic curriculum, include internships and New York certification for particular

courses, these motivate students and are the reason many students chose to travel long distances to attend this school. Curriculum modification results from analysis of results data, such as the change from global to United States history. The school also builds on from the 8th grade curriculum so that students do not repeat content. Advisory or exploratory classes support students in their academic and vocational choices. The library has vocational books, both in non-fiction and fiction sections, which enhance the literacy work that occurs in classes.

Teachers are accountable for learning, mindful of individual student circumstances and offer encouragement. Student and staff surveys are used, in addition to other hard and soft data, to improve instruction. As a result, the school is implementing more interactive instruction, such as in chemistry and physics. The school wishes to ensure differentiated instruction through different activities is consistent, embedded practice to meet the needs of all students, including higher achievers, and to further engage students. One example of careful use of data to inform staffing, budget and schedule decisions is the change to help smoother transition for 9th grade students, which has proved successful.

The small learning community structure gives students the opportunity to identify with the school and make personal connections, which means they feel comfortable in the school. Although the school places high value on attendance and engagement, there are still many students who do not benefit regularly from what the school offers. The school has tried many strategies to improve attendance and has made noticeable progress overall through rigorous work on long-term absence. Attendance is a constant concern for the school and it is looking to intensify the reward system, offer role models and give quicker recognition of individual improvements and achievement.

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.

Since restructuring, the selection and retention of staff has become more carefully and considered. The principal wants to ensure that new staff share the school vision, know the community and have good content knowledge. All teachers are expected to bring commitment and dedication to this student population. In this way, the principal has built an enthusiastic administration that works cohesively with all the small learning community staff to share the vision and the belief in the students.

Professional development is an intrinsic element of the restructure plan. Two lead teachers, for literacy and mathematics, work in partnership with the UFT Teacher Center teacher to act as critical friends for teachers, bring research into teachers' practice and offer effective professional support. Professional development occurs in scheduled study groups, team meetings and also informally across all grades and content areas. All staff share strategies and work together with student support teachers as regular group members. Professional development priorities for the school are identified through data analysis and its impact is monitored. For example, the initiative to use Cornell note-taking skills across the curriculum is being evaluated through teacher and student feedback.

The principal has a sound knowledge of her staff and has implemented many changes since her appointment such as class observations and professional discussions. Assistant principals also regularly conduct 'snapshot' classroom visits and have oversight of their small learning community. The principal and administration have a clear understanding of the path the schools needs to take to build on progress so far, and are working to establish greater rigor and consistency across classrooms.

The principal is respected and leads with calm authority. She empowers staff, modeling respect for all school community members. As a result of data analysis of incident occurrences, scanning systems are in place which means that the school now provides a safe, orderly environment with clear rules and responsibilities.

As a vocational high school, the school strives to build extensive partnerships to supplement student experience and to support personal development. Links with the Fashion Institute for Technology, The National Federation for Teaching Entrepreneurship and several community based organizations impact positively on student self-esteem and achievement.

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 has restructured within the framework of the New York City Small Learning Communities Office and the organization 'High Schools That Work'. This means it benefits from ongoing support and guidance in its mission to improve student outcomes further. Data was used to inform the restructure and also assists in continual monitoring and evaluation. The school leadership team and all constituents are involved in decision making, with the Cabinet, and particularly the principal, maintaining a firm overview. As a result of such analysis, for example, the school moved from a four-community model to five, in order to better provide a cohesive program to particularly meet the needs of 9th graders as they transition into the school.

Comparative data across grades, small learning communities and other schools informs realignment of practice within the school. There is a particular focus on credit accumulation and recovery when it is required, so that students graduate and are able to pursue their vocational aspirations. The use of National Occupational Competency Testing and other career and technical education standardized examinations means that progress is measured within each small learning community content area and so is more meaningful for students.

The school encourages reflective practice and collaboration, and some interesting initiatives have resulted. Some of these are not fully formalized, or at the point where staff can share good practice or evaluate impact. The school recognizes the need to identify actions needed to achieve planning goals, and the small steps that will demonstrate progress within agreed timescales, in all aspects of school planning.

In the short time since restructuring, there has been a measurable improvement in student performance through the implementation of more rigorous and consistent routines and practice. The school is looking to build on this performance through close analysis of data and associated professional development to strengthen rigorous instructional practice and deepen collegial collaboration.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: William H Maxwell Career and Technical Education High School (HS 660)	∅	✓	+
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	