



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Coalition School for Social Change

High School 409

**220 West 58 th Street
New York
NY 10019**

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Reviewer: David Herbert

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Coalition School for Social Change is a high school with 421 students enrolled in grades 9 through 12. The school shares a converted office building with another high school, with common canteen, library and gymnasium facilities. Students also share the school entrance and stairways to access all parts of the building. The conversion of the building has left a number of minor difficulties in comparison with a purpose built school, such as limited access to some classrooms through others and the lack of a suitable auditorium.

Sixty percent of the students are Hispanic, and 32% are Black. Just over 3% of students are White and 1.5% are Asian. The number of recent arrivals to the country is very low compared with other schools in the City. Eight percent of the students are English language learners. Just over 5% of students are special education students, and a total of 21.5% of the students receive special education services. At 81%, the school attendance rate is below the average for the City. The school is eligible for Title 1 funding for 75% of students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The strong leadership of the principal is highly respected by staff, students and their parents.
- The principal and faculty use the opportunities of being a small school to know and understand the personal strengths and needs of each individual student well.
- Data and other monitoring information is used well to set high expectations for students.
- Good systems and procedures involve all faculty members in evaluating student performance data to identify their strengths and needs.
- Coaches are very effective in leading professional development activities and school improvement work.
- Curriculum, scheduling and instruction are adapted sensitively to meet students' needs.
- Collaborative work by teachers is good, assessing students' needs across different curriculum subjects.
- When individual students or groups are identified as having specific needs, carefully targeted interventions are provided to support them.
- The school runs smoothly as a result of good relationships in which students are held responsible for their own behavior.
- Students understand and respect the efforts the school makes to support them.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that teachers are accountable for collating and acting on all relevant data to support student performance, including absence and lateness information.
- Set more measurable goals for student achievement at school, grade, class and individual levels and for identified groups, where relevant.
- Continue to increase differentiation in instruction.
- Devise and implement ways to evaluate the impact of professional development initiatives.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with some well-developed features.

In this small school the principal and faculty know each student individually, maintaining good relationships based on mutual respect. These close relationships, coupled with the analysis of performance data and direct observations mean that staff really do 'know their students'. Students respond well to this level of care and interest, and respect staff generally, and the principal in particular, for her interest in them. One student said of the principal; 'She knows how to understand me'. The staff collaborates well, sharing data and their evaluation of it and considering the implications of whole school issues for their own teaching. Through discussion and good teamwork they assess students' skills across the whole curriculum, exploring how improving performance in one subject can help raise achievement in others. Their shared focus for professional development reflects this collaboration, built on common concern for students and leading to a cohesive approach to their instruction. At school level, goals are set for the development of specific skills that are identified by data analysis. At class level, these are translated into targets for individual achievement which are shared with students by teachers to set high expectations of their work. The school sensitively adapts the pattern of provision for individual students, responding quickly to their needs. The focus on individual students has limited the analysis of performance at class, grade and group levels and the setting of targets for these groups, leading to the school being proficient overall.

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 a wide range of data including standardized tests, attendance and cutting reports, classroom grades and student work. Together with reading assessments, these sources are used to regularly evaluate students' performance across the curriculum. The principal sets clear expectations with teachers as to how this data should be analyzed so that it has direct implications for improving their planning and instruction. The principal and faculty also use eighth grade data and school assessments to evaluate ninth grade freshmen so that they can provide well for new students from the very beginning of their time in the school. Data is analyzed by the principal, coaches and curriculum leaders to identify strengths and concerns which are then taken into subject and grade level meetings for further exploration. Reasons for any patterns in performance are sought so that corrective action can be planned, informing scheduling and instruction. The inclusion of all relevant staff in this collaborative process results from the principal's good leadership.

Due to the small size of the school this evaluation, monitoring and tracking of data can be completed at individual student level. As a result each student is known very well by staff. Their performance is compared across different subjects and courses to identify specific areas or skills that would help them improve across the curriculum. Sometimes data is

researched to identify students who might be at risk in their work before they encounter difficulties. A group of teachers are currently trialing an on-line grade book to help them further develop the recording and assessment of performance data. Although there is much strength in current practice the school has yet to extend data analysis to the performance of groups, such as ethnic groups, special education students or comparisons with other similar schools. There is a need for student absence and tardiness data to be acted on swiftly by teachers and included in the overall evaluation of each student's performance.

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

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

Having analyzed the available data, the principal and faculty fully explore the implications for the instructional program offered. In each subject of the curriculum the intended changes to provision, organization, attendance and scheduling are defined. The specific skills that are weaker in each subject are identified so that instruction can be focused on areas of need. At school and grade level the acquisition of these skills is given more priority than the setting of measurable performance goals using data. At class level teachers use data as well to set high expectations for individual students in their forthcoming assessments. Students feel that they are held to account personally for their achievements. The planning of instruction for special education students is well developed with detailed programs being planned for them. For example, data was used to identify a group of ninth grade students as being at risk of underperforming, before they had experienced significant difficulty in their work. Individual goals were then established for each student and appropriate intervention strategies were matched to their needs. This support was effective for the majority of the group, helping them make improvements to their application in class. The involvement of parents in the setting of goals for students is well developed. The school offers good opportunities for parents to find out more about the nature of instruction. Parents say that their parent coordinator is readily available and provides good support. Guidance counselors also help students in setting challenging personal goals. They keep detailed, confidential records to track the advice given and goals agreed so that they can later review the progress of students. The principal and faculty strive continuously to improve student achievement through regular and detailed discussions about individual students' progress. This ambition drives their thinking and activity on a day to day basis and forms a major component of the character of the school.

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

This area of the school's work is well-developed overall

The school is not obliged to implement the mandated curriculum but chooses to do so. A great deal of collaborative work goes into planning the curriculum and matching it to students' needs. The principal holds teachers to account for curriculum mapping. This not only includes defining the proposed content for instruction, but also addresses the skills and understanding the students will acquire, the assessments that will be used, and the

acceptable level of evidence that will be required to show what they have achieved. In this way the collection of assessment data is included in each stage of teachers' planning and is well developed. The use of this data to plan differentiated tasks and instruction for students in lessons is proficient.

Staffing and scheduling decisions, supported by budget planning are well developed in their sensitive adaptation to student needs. A good example of this is the mid-year restructuring of the tenth grade curriculum organization that has just taken place. Faculty determined that this was necessary because the timing of some double lessons did not match students' interest and application and this showed in their attendance and behavior. Classes were re-grouped and the scheduling adapted to overcome this in a carefully justified change. The new arrangements are being carefully monitored to ensure they have the desired impact on students' learning and early indications are positive. Within these well planned groups teachers differentiate their instruction, though this could be extended to engage all students even better. Due to the committed attitude of staff, every student is known individually by a range of adults with whom they have good relationships. Students respond well to this, and have a particular respect for the principal, realizing that she knows them well and cares about their future. Securing good attendance is a continuous priority for the school. The attendance rate is below the average for the City. Parents are contacted when students are absent for more than one day and good attendance is emphasized through the close knowledge that the school has of families. Nevertheless this remains a resistant issue for the school to resolve. Systems for rapid and agreed response from teachers on lateness and absence need to be more consistent.

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

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

The principal has made focused staff appointments to further her vision for the school. In particular this has included the recruitment of coaches who have specific expertise in the curriculum. They play an effective strategic role in setting priorities for school improvement. For example, there is awareness that immediate issues such as the behaviour of students can best be addressed through curriculum and instructional development to engage them more, rather than using disciplinary measures alone. Coaches use data confidently and compare outcomes with their wide knowledge of regional and City outcomes. Plans for improvement are detailed and are implemented with thoroughness. Quantitative targets such as aggregate pass rates in exams are sometimes used as success criteria for professional development work. Coaches work flexibly, co-teaching, leading development activities and advising colleagues. Working with curriculum teams, they effectively support the improvement of literacy and math skills in all subject areas.

Professional development is targeted at improvement needs, which are identified from data and observation. The principal has recently introduced staff 'study groups'. These give teachers the opportunity to work collaboratively to research and implement improvement on issues which will have broad benefit for instruction. Topics include 'Engaging Students Creatively with Technology' and 'Differentiating Instruction'. One teacher commented that she would have liked to have been able to join most of the groups. Despite the sharp focus on professional development, the outcomes and specific improvement expected from activities are not always clearly identified, and are not often

measurable. Nevertheless, teachers discuss the outcomes and evaluate the impact of development together well. The principal observes teaching frequently and knows the quality of instruction across the school. Teachers also have regular opportunities to observe each other, and there are clear protocols to make this a profitable exercise. This activity is based on openness and shared responsibility. The outcomes from assessment are evaluated robustly to identify causative factors. These are then used to plan further professional development. Youth development, support services and partnerships with outside bodies are used well to extend the school's programs. The school runs very smoothly due to the attention that the principal and faculty give to individual student needs and the promotion of good routines.

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 close working relationships in the school enable continuous monitoring and feedback between principal, coaches, curriculum leaders and teachers. This is based on data, assessment of students' work, observations and the day to day experience of faculty. Data is used to compare students across classes and teachers, but rarely between schools due to the difficulty of obtaining the detailed level of information needed necessary to achieve this well.

Teachers have mid year and annual self-evaluation and review which informs professional development plans for the following period.

In school plans, the goals are more often qualitative rather than defined with data, and are therefore difficult to evaluate with precision. However, plans are adapted and modified, sometimes on a significant scale. This can be seen in the restructuring of the tenth grade curriculum mid-year. The progress of individual student interventions is monitored through ongoing discussion and feedback between all involved. Adaptations to students' programs are made promptly when evaluation indicates that change would be beneficial. The monitoring and revision of plans is therefore stronger at individual student level than at overall school level, due to the need to define more closely the outcomes sought in school goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Coalition School for Social Change (HS 409)	∅	✓	+
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	