



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

School of the Future

Middle and High School 413

**127 East 22 Street
Manhattan
New York
10010**

Principal: Catherine DeLaura

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Reviewer: Georgie Beasley

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School of the Future has some 700 students enrolled from grade 6 through 12. The school's population comprises 31% White, 28% Hispanic, 23% Black and 16% Asian and Pacific Islander students. The proportion of English language learners is very small at 0.6%. All students are proficient English speakers although many speak another language at home in addition to English. Some 16% of the school's population is special education students which is a typical figure for similar and City schools. The school does not receive Title 1 funding because the proportion of students eligible is below the City average. Attendance at 96% is far higher similar and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principal promote the school's vision for students' learning highly effectively.
- Teaching methods, students' progress and learning and the curriculum are at the top of the list for staff discussion in team and grade meetings.
- Teachers are highly committed to students' academic and personal development, know their needs well and plan work that is engaging and challenging.
- Students have good reasons to be proud of their achievements because they nearly all give the best that they can.
- The curriculum is based around skills as well as content, enabling students to apply their learning across a range of different classes and subjects.
- The 'Habits of Mind' skills in particular are helping students to take charge of their own learning and achievement.
- Students receive good guidance for the future through personal development interviews and the college application process.
- Relationships are very positive because of the emphasis on students becoming independent learners and through a strong personal development program.
- By the time they graduate, students are reflective, considerate and confident young adults.
- Students are polite and respectful in all their dealings with each other and adults because they in turn are treated with respect and honesty.

What the school needs to improve

- Set out the school goals, link them specifically to each grade's expected end of year achievement in the humanities, mathematics and science and ensure staff refer to and make use of them in meetings and discussions.
- Make greater use of the outcomes from the school's analysis of its wide and varied range of data to select targeted groups for monitoring in the 'data day' discussions and team meetings.
- Complete the work to identify how students' skills develop from grade 6 through 12 in all subjects, including mathematics and technology.
- Consider ways to build more lessons in the Arts into the school day.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The vision to ‘challenge students to be independent, intellectually curious and responsible in a supportive environment’ is at the heart of the school’s work. It gives students a well-rounded education that balances personal and academic achievement. As a result, all students are well-prepared for life beyond school. All students are successful in gaining places to college because the expectation is set from the moment that they walk through the door that they can and will succeed. Despite narrow corridors and many floors to get to classrooms and the gym, students move around the building with care and consideration for others’ safety and welfare.

This a reflective school where all staff and students think very carefully about what they do and why they do it. In assignments, students give reasons and explain ideas. In lessons, the teachers use questions to effectively probe and extend students’ thinking. In team meetings, staff ask each other challenging questions to find reasons why some students struggle or do not achieve as well as the school knows they can. Consequently, programs are adjusted where necessary to match the students’ individual needs extremely well and learning is strengthened. It is a school where to ask for help is viewed as a strength.

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 well developed.

The school constantly gathers and uses an extensive range of data to gain a thorough understanding of every aspect of each student’s performance and progress. This is particularly so for students with specific academic or personal needs. In meetings, teachers and guidance counselors discuss the targeted students’ performance to quantify precisely the progress made and plan effective intervention strategies. Monthly checks ensure that programs are fully effective and reflected in the students’ learning. Teachers develop rubrics for assignments and know what they have to assess and why. Students have these also and know what is expected and can take ownership of their work.

The school uses a program of portfolios and exhibition work to demonstrate the students’ knowledge, understanding and skills. This helps them develop well as individuals with the confidence to apply what they have learned to real situations. The teachers are very clear about what each student knows, can do and must demonstrate in order to pass the course and meet the requirements for graduation. The teachers’ grading system is being improved further to separately assess students’ knowledge, skills and work habits. This is to ensure that the school and students know the particular aspects which need more attention as their portfolios and exhibitions are assembled. The school analyzes its data closely to group students in classes, identify who would benefit from intervention programs or guidance counseling, and determine those who can be challenged more.

The school analyzes data very closely by ethnicity and gender and compares how well different groups achieve and make progress in each subject and grade. They know for example, that in some grades, Black American girls perform less well than other students in mathematics and Hispanic boys less well in humanities. As yet, the school has not made sufficient use of this information.

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 well developed.

All members of the school community have an input into setting the school’s immediate and long-term goals and in writing the associated action plans. The school’s overarching goal is for all students to graduate with honors and every parent, student and member of staff strives towards this end. Interim goals aim to ensure that all students meet or exceed the grade standard each year and have the right social and personal skills to confidently face the challenges ahead. Special education students, English language learners, those students who are at risk of failing a grade and those who have personal issues are targeted immediately for intervention programs and their progress is monitored closely.

The school’s goals are measurable but measures are based on annual incremental increases rather than aligned to the individual goals that students in each grade or subject are expected to reach. Consequently, the measures to check whether the school is on track to reach its goals are not as precise as they could be. Goals in subject action plans outline the actions the school intends to take rather than the outcomes it wants to achieve.

The school focuses its discussions well on how the different ability groups can be supported or pushed to do better in class. It does not target ethnic and gender groups for specific discussion and so does not have a clear enough understanding of why some of these students do less well than other students in some grades and subjects.

The school has high expectations of students. The students know what they have to do to pass the grade. Teachers are rigorous in grading work and require students to achieve pass-levels in work habits, content and skills elements for each assignment. Through regular formal and informal discussions in lessons and at parent teacher consultations, the students and their parents know the goals set and are helped to achieve them. Everyone shares a vision for the children to do well and help is always available in 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.

The school has implemented a program that identifies for each grade, the skills which students need to develop alongside subject knowledge and understanding. In this way, the students develop and use a wide range of skills across all subjects. This ‘skills spiraling’ is securely in place for the humanities and science but is still developing in mathematics and technology. A structured program called ‘Habits of Mind’ helps the students to work through a specific learning process. It educates them to structure their

learning orally and in writing and to listen to, consider and respect other views. Students are taught to think and then asked to explain their thinking and justify their answers with evidence. This approach gives students the vital skills they need for adult life. The curriculum is narrowed by the lack of regular lessons in the Arts during the school day.

Teachers use data very effectively to differentiate their instruction by identifying those students who need support and those who need greater challenge. The tasks which teachers plan are open-ended, with students actively involved in planning and developing their work. Questions are used effectively to spark new ideas, open up debate or take discussions in a different direction. The teachers target individuals to make sure everyone in the class contributes. A range of exciting teaching methods such as drama, debates and practical investigations, fully engages the students.

Teachers and guidance counselors know every student's academic and personal needs really well and offer support and challenge in equal measures. Personal development is a high priority. By equipping students with independent learning skills and giving them the confidence to express opinions, the school ensures that students are open and honest about their academic and emotional needs.

All budget decisions support the school's vision and philosophy for learning. Staffing and scheduling support the needs of students well. For example, the college application process is given prominence. The specific program at the end of grade 12 helps students to develop important time-management skills. Block scheduling of subjects and links between English and social studies makes learning more interesting. Teachers create rubrics to make sure that the students in grades 11 and 12 learn the subject knowledge they need in history, geography and citizenship as well as improve their English and mathematics skills.

Attendance is good and any concerns are rigorously followed up by guidance counselors.

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 school has a very clear staff selection process. As a result, everyone embraces the school's vision and uses data constantly to monitor the students' progress and check the effectiveness of instruction. Teachers new to the school have good support from the administration and from other teachers to help them understand systems and procedures.

Professional development focuses equally on goals for individual teachers and on the school's needs. Previous professional development focused on using data to identify and develop strategies for differentiating instruction. As a result, teachers now use data effectively to group students, to vary their teaching methods and to develop thinking and subject skills. The current focus is the progression in skills necessary as students encounter new work through each grade. This helps teachers to differentiate instruction further and the students to successfully apply their learning to other subjects. Teachers learn from each other by openly asking for help and visiting each other's classrooms.

The principal is respected by staff, students and parents. Working in partnership with the assistant principal, systems have been established, which ensure the school runs smoothly and maintains a strong focus on students' achievement and success. The

principal and assistant principal, through frequent class observations and walkthroughs, have a secure overview of the quality of instruction. They talk with students, look at their work and analyze assessment data. They provide constructive feedback to teachers to pinpoint the strengths to be maintained and areas where further improvement is needed.

A carefully designed schedule and a well thought-out team structure, enable teachers and other staff to meet weekly. Guided by clear protocols for these meetings, the teachers plan learning collaboratively, discuss programs and goals and evaluate students' progress.

Time targets are in place to structure monitoring activities. Grade and department leaders hold regular discussions with teachers to check how well things are going and to decide what adjustments are needed to programs and organization. The performance and progress of individual students at risk of failing the grade or subject are discussed in detail and plans for personal or academic support decided and implemented immediately.

Good partnerships with colleges help the school to match students to particular institutions. Outside services work with teachers to provide an extensive after school program which enables the students to enjoy a wide range of interests and supports them with homework.

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 well developed.

The school monitors its plans and programs closely to make sure they are meeting the needs of all students. All data which the school gathers is used to measure how close the school is to reaching its goals. On occasion, when the school finds itself reacting to a situation rather than managing its development, the teams spring into action to refine processes and look more closely at the underlying reasons for the problem.

Each department is scheduled to meet with the senior leadership team at its monthly sessions to outline departmental progress against the goals in the comprehensive education plan and to evaluate the programs in use to reach them. This enables the senior leadership team to check the school's progress towards its annual and longer term goals. Each year's evaluation feeds coherently and effectively into the subsequent planning phases.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: School of the Future (MS/HS 413)	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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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