



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Manhattan Village Academy**

**High School 439**

**43 West 22 Street  
New York  
NY 10010**

**Principal: Hector Geager**

**Dates of review: February 8 – 9, 2007**

**Reviewer: Peter Friend**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Manhattan Village Academy is a high school with around 400 students in grades 9 through 12. About 56 percent of the students are Hispanic with 27 percent Black, 6 percent Asian or Pacific Islander and 5 percent White. About 14 percent of students are English language learners and around 20 percent are special education students. The school is eligible for Title I funding. Attendance is above average compared with other New York high schools. The school has a slightly higher proportion of inexperienced teachers than other schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school sets high expectations for students and teachers.
- Data is used rigorously to track trends in achievement, measure progress and identify students who under-perform.
- The comprehensive range of information from teacher assessments is used well to pinpoint areas of under-performance.
- Action plans for recovery and systematic checks on progress are completed rigorously.
- The principal has a clear vision and sense of purpose, which drives the school forward.
- Staff are all committed to improving students' performance.
- Teachers are willing to take leadership roles.
- Teaching is generally of high quality, particularly the setting of learning objectives.
- Grade teams coordinate information well within grade teams to evaluate curricula and track progress.
- Students are highly engaged in their learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to work to improve graduation and attendance rates.
- Spread the good practice within grade teams to improve the sharing of information across and between grades and subjects.
- Continue to develop strategies for differentiating work for students and offer systematic challenge for higher achievers.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

The school is suffused with a culture of success. Academic achievement drives all its activities. High expectations are set, and generally met, for students and teachers. Clear educational goals guide the work. Data is used rigorously to measure progress and identify students who under-perform. The action programs to recover such students are a strength of the school.

The Principal leads well by giving a clear purpose to the work of the school. Members of staff are committed to realizing this vision, and staff and students work hard. The quality of much of the instruction is good.

The impact of the staff's work can be seen clearly in the engagement of the students and in the results, many of them continuing to improve, that students achieve in their courses and tests. These successes include special education students and English language learners.

The school's success is partly built on the effective analysis of data to track progress and achievement, but also on the rich wealth of information possessed by the teachers about what students know, understand and can do. This wide range of information is used rigorously to create instructional programs that cater well for the academic needs of individual students.

### **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 prime focus of the school is academic success for the students and all efforts are devoted to maximizing success. As part of this process, a wide range of data is rigorously used to track the progress of individual students, the success of individual teachers in helping their students to achieve academically, and how well each grade level and subject are achieving. At the school level, constant checks using data show how well succeeding cohorts achieve on City and State tests, and how successful comparatively each subject faculty is. Scholarship reports are used to check pass rates for students and also to check the performance of individual teachers. The culture of the school is built around academic success, and teachers and students are fully committed to achieving to the best of their ability. As part of this process, the school rigorously examines the performance of schools with a more advantaged intake to maintain the constant challenge to itself.

A well developed feature is the effective way the school further interrogates the data about performance to identify students deemed to be at risk. For this purpose, summative data about the school and from the classroom are deployed to identify such students as early as possible. Further data, often from the teacher's assessments of students' performance,

are then analyzed to identify the areas of knowledge, understanding and skill where improvement is needed, and to examine which instructional strategies are most likely to meet the individual's learning needs. This systematic analysis is then translated into a rigorous program for recovery designed to suit the individual which often includes work on specific skills, booster classes and extra support. This is combined with very effectively coordinated follow up so that the student's progress is relentlessly tracked. Such programs have been effective in raising the performance of English language learners and special education students, though the school makes no distinction when identifying and helping any student it deems at risk of failing.

**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.**

A major strength in the school is the setting of clear and challenging targets at all levels. The school set itself the goals of achieving 90 percent in pass rates for classes, graduation and attendance. Many of these have been achieved and have been raised to 95 percent. Goals are set by teachers for themselves at grade levels and targets for individual students ensue from discussions between teachers. The goals for students are constantly reviewed or adjusted; successes are celebrated and risk factors concerned with potential failure rigorously pursued. Action to support swiftly follows for students who under-perform. Much time, effort and resources are put into intervention programs to raise the performance of such students so that they can pass their courses. There is constant follow-up to ensure under performing students are kept on track. The school is successful in raising students' performance and improving attitudes so that they rarely spend too long as major causes of concern.

A key characteristic of the school is the high level of expectations set for students and for teachers. Teachers at each grade level set priorities for completion of work, attendance, and pass rates, and for the recovery of failing students. These targets are systematically reviewed and revised, and the process involves the sharing of a wealth of assessment information about students. The coordination and dissemination of such information is less strong between grade levels, but is a major strength within each grade level.

Detailed targets are set for students to complete portfolios of work. Teacher discussion at grade levels often concentrates on what students will need to know, understand and do to complete assignments satisfactorily. Such information sharing often results in agreed approaches to instruction, and ways in which teaching needs to be adapted for individual students. Teachers' planning often includes differentiating work to offer challenge for high achieving 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 well developed.**

Teachers willingly accept accountability for improving student outcomes. The Principal is rigorous in seeking explanations for deterioration in student progress. Professional

discussion, particularly between teachers in the same grade, often centers on the knowledge and understanding expected of students in a program of work. From this starting point, appropriate instructional strategies are agreed. Discussion of learning outcomes helps to promote consistency in teachers' assessments and ensures that planning is detailed and purposeful. Grade teams often use examples of work to check the consistency of individual teachers' assessment. The students in turn are clear about what is required of them. They know what they do well and how they need to improve. Planning by teachers includes the adaptation of curricula to ensure it is appropriate to students' needs, and this in turn often includes making links with work in other subjects to reinforce learning. The teaching of study and research skills provides necessary background to support the students in producing portfolios of their own research in several subjects.

Staffing decisions are influenced by the school's determination to drive up performance levels. Consequently, teachers display a coordinated sense of commitment to the school's goals. They work very hard to achieve them. The school has employed additional teachers to pursue its priorities. It funds a teacher to support English language learners and an extra teacher in the lower grades enables class sizes to be reduced. Teachers also willingly take on leadership roles in the development of programs of work, adapting curricula or sharing successful instructional strategies.

A further strength of the school is the levels of engagement of students in their work. Many students cite personal experiences of help they have received and the progress that they have made. In most classrooms, good teaching results in good concentration by the students and high levels of purposeful participation. The students work hard just like their teachers do. The school makes considerable efforts to improve attendance and lateness, and the data shows that it has met its targets well enough to need to raise them. The staff continues to work hard to sustain improvements. Systems to track and follow up absence and lateness work efficiently.

**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 leads the school well. He has a clear vision for improving the school and engenders a concerted sense of purpose among the staff. In doing this, he has encouraged staff to take on leadership for themselves and welcomes initiatives from others, for example, the incorporation of learning objectives in classroom planning. Consequently, the school has a strong sense of collegiality. Leaders use data well to improve planning by carefully monitoring assessment results.

Professional development is most usually generated by needs revealed by data and informed by perceptive, detailed evaluations of students' learning undertaken by the teachers. Every team meeting includes the discussion of students' work, including how instructional strategies might be improved. As a result, good practice is frequently shared between teachers at the same grade level. Professional development is part of this process and is the more effective for being closely linked to the needs of students or the current curricula. The recent discussion about including learning objectives in planning has sharpened the purpose of many lessons. The good communication within grade levels could usefully be extended to further sharing of information between grade levels.

The Principal frequently observes classroom teaching and is systematic in informing teachers of what went well or how they could improve. Such observations by the Principal and other senior staff are often focused on an aspect of teaching and learning of current interest. The results of the observations then become topics for professional discussion by the staff. Classroom observation by all teachers is encouraged and teachers feel comfortable in visiting other classrooms and sharing practice. The impact of these systematic evaluations can be seen in consistently good instructional practices, such as the use of open questions to assess knowledge and encourage student participation.

The school uses outside bodies to promote its academic goals. For example, outside teachers help to run a health education program. Banks help senior students to understand how to set up a business and to invest in stock markets. There is a range of extra-curricular activities available for 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 well developed.**

'Plan, do and review' pervades the activities of the school. Effective action is the keynote of this process. The school measures plans against how effectively they will work towards the achievement of its key goals for improving students' performance. Action is carefully designed to meet the needs of the situation and always predicated on helping students to achieve the grades they need to pass their courses and do well in their examinations. Frequent checks on progress make use of a wide range of data and involve productive professional discussion. Initial action often consists of finely honed strategies for learning, but can be changed if success is too slow in coming or new targets need to be set. The system for intervening to support failing students is very responsive. The impact of such programs can be seen in the school's data illustrating increases in the pass rates in City and State tests, including special education students and English language learners. The school has a very low proportion of overage and under-credited students.

The teachers' eagerness to do their best for the students results in almost constant professional evaluation of how strategies are working and the review of goals to ensure they remain appropriate. Every team meeting of teachers in the different grades includes a review of priorities as well as a review of particular students' work. Meetings of team leaders, administrators and the Cabinet also include a review of progress towards goals to date. This works particularly well with under-performing students, but also involves the setting of challenging targets for high achievers. The system is effective in maintaining the correct blend of pressure and encouragement for each student. The school demonstrates that early and effective intervention works.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Manhattan Village Academy (HS439)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>			<b>X</b>
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>		<b>X</b>	
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>			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>	Ø	✓	+
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>	Ø	✓	+
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>	Ø	✓	+
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