



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The High School for Law and Public Service

High School 467

**549 Audubon Avenue
New York
NY 10040**

Principal: Mr. Nicholas Politis

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Reviewer: Stuart Satinet

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The High School for Law and Public Service is located in the Washington Heights area of Manhattan. It was formed in 1999 when George Washington High School was replaced by four smaller high schools on the same campus. There are approximately 600 students in grades 9 through 12, 94% of whom are Hispanic, 5% Black and approximately 1% from other ethnic groups. A high proportion of students (about 39%) are English Language Learners and about 12% are special education students. 85% of students are Title 1 eligible. In 2005 attendance was 88% which exceeds the average figures for similar schools and City schools. The school has a stable staff and there are links between teachers across the four schools. Most classes take place on one floor but students share common areas with the other schools on the campus.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, who provides strong leadership focused on continuous improvement, has a very good knowledge of the students in the school.
- Cooperation between the principals of the four campus schools has enabled the sharing of improvement strategies which have contributed to a positive culture.
- Data is used consistently to understand the needs and analyze the progress of students.
- The administration work effectively with teams of teachers to create a collaborative approach to school improvement.
- Teachers have a clear view of the priorities for development which are articulated and shared across the school.
- There is mutual respect between students and teachers which is supported by effective guidance and counseling services.
- Attendance is a high priority and the school has been successful in developing systems to improve rates progressively over time.
- There has been a strong focus on the training and development of teachers which has improved teaching and learning.
- Strong links with outside bodies are used successfully to extend the experience of students and raise expectations.
- Good use is made of displays of students work and rubrics to set expectations for students and celebrate achievements.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the collaboration across the campus to plan the future development of the four schools.
- To support longer term planning, agree the vision for the next stage in the school's development in collaboration with all involved and consider how progress towards these goals will be measured.
- Develop a wider range of courses for meeting the needs of high achieving students.
- Increase participation rates of parents in activities related to the curriculum.
- Increase the range of inter-disciplinary work in the school to spread good practice.
- Build on the successful use of data by broadening the range of analysis.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The school was established in difficult circumstances in temporary buildings but has made very good progress since that time. Effective systems for using data were born out of the necessity of raising achievement levels from a low base. Standards have risen consistently over an eight year period and systems have been refined. The confidence of the community in the school has risen and applications to attend have increased dramatically. The school is seen as high performing and gap closing. The principal has a detailed knowledge of individual students and works closely and collaboratively with the administration and teachers in agreeing goals for further development. He recognises that the school has reached a point where it needs to plan how to get to “the next level”. His commitment to the school is acknowledged and he has the respect of teachers, students and parents.

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 principal has detailed records of all students and knows their levels of ability very well. This sets the tone for the overall approach in the school which is one where data is regularly discussed and successfully analyzed. A range of documents provides a comprehensive picture of individual students and tracking data has been used effectively to look at particular issues. Guidance Counselors track the progress of students through the school using data and personal contacts. The cabinet discusses data each week and the assistant principals lead discussions at a subject level which make decisions about how to respond to what the data is revealing. Parents are invited into the school to discuss the data and there are good attendances at this type of event. The principal recognises that there is scope to analyze more widely and plans are being made to consider gender issues. The new periodic assessment system constructed by the North-West Evaluation Association has recently been introduced and the school is beginning to use this data to understand trends. Comparisons with other schools are made at regular intervals and there is a pride in the considerable progress that has been made which is reinforcing the confident use of data. The four campus high schools meet regularly to share ideas and this has also encouraged the effective use of comparative data. In extending the range of data used in recent years, the school has developed effective systems which aim to make its use as interactive and “user-friendly” as possible.

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.

The main goal setting document is the Comprehensive Education Plan which is drawn up collaboratively following data analysis and discussion across the school. As a result, five key priorities were agreed for 2006-07 and all involved were clear about overall direction. Assistant principals reviewed the whole school goals with subject teachers who drew up useful action plans to outline key tasks and activities linked to timescales and success criteria. Professional development activities supporting the proposals are identified in a week by week plan which alerts teachers to the improvement strategies proposed. Literacy levels are an important area for the school because of the high level of English Language Learners and particular attention is paid to developing additional plans for those who have particular difficulties with this issue.

Counselors use status reports effectively with students and parents to identifying how further progress can be achieved. Parents are very involved in the life of the school and are well informed about academic progress. Students are given clear guidance about the steps they have to take to improve and the school is seeking to extend the guidance that is given to parents. Clear processes have been established for setting and adjusting short-term and long-term performance targets for particular groups which are clearly described in the curriculum overview. The overall planning cycles for the school concentrate on annual targets which are collaboratively established, well-developed and carefully monitored. Although longer term planning takes place, it is not as systematic at school or campus level as the annual planning process.

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.

As part of an empowerment initiative the school has considered processes for identifying students with particular needs, establishing performance targets and determining a curriculum which addresses skills deficits. As a result, the school is pro-active in aligning the curriculum to respond to needs highlighted by data analysis. There has been a strong focus on improving grade levels which has driven up standards. As standards rise, the school recognises there is a need to increase the focus on extending the experiences of high achieving students. There has been an effective dialogue about teaching strategies which has led to the consistent application of such approaches as the workshop model, across the school.

Students are grouped effectively according to their level of skill development. As a result of these factors, student engagement is high. Students’ work and their achievements are widely celebrated through the effective use of display. Relationships between students and teachers are positive and mutually respectful. There is a strong emphasis on classroom observation which has been used effectively to encourage a dialogue about learning and to consider such issues as the grouping of students. Learning walks involving a range of teachers are systematically used to look at academic rigor and to reinforce good practice. Effective planning takes place in subject teams and there is a commitment to

encourage more inter-disciplinary work to assist the spread of good practice. Budget, staffing and resourcing decisions are closely linked to priorities which have been agreed in the planning process. For instance, providing smaller class size and improving technology have influenced decisions about resources this year. Attendance has been a key priority for the school and the improvement in levels is the result of effective systems linked to the interventions of a team with detailed knowledge of individual students.

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 was invited to take part in the New York City Teaching Fellows program and this has given excellent experience in training teachers which has had a positive impact on practice in the school. The appointment of teacher fellows after a period of assessment and training has helped to develop the capacity of a stable staff. New teachers are effectively supported by mentors and a well-targeted professional development program ensures that regular skills training takes place for all teachers. There has been a strong focus on professional development which is carefully designed to meet school and specific needs with a strong emphasis on data analysis.

Teams meet regularly to share best practice during common periods and this has had a positive impact on classroom practice. Learning walks by the principal and administration to review practice have provided valuable information to reinforce training strategies. These combine challenge and support and have led to a regular dialogue about what is happening in classrooms. This is reinforced by inter-visitations which have encouraged self-evaluation and led to the development of improvement strategies.

There is a consistent focus on understanding the progress of students through the analysis of data. All teachers have had training on interpreting data, most recently to use the North-West Evaluation Association assessments, and effective new approaches have been introduced as a result. Guidance counselors and deans use and add to the data available on individual students and have well-developed systems for analyzing factors which affect student achievement. The school has strong partnerships with outside bodies which are used to raise the expectations of students, extend their experience and encourage active learning.

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 analyzes data regularly and systematically to evaluate student progress. The Comprehensive Education Plan is securely based on an evaluation of performance in the previous year. Key areas of development are identified which alert all involved to the priorities which have been established for further improvement and support the monitoring of progress. Plans tend to have an annual cycle and longer term planning is less evident. Detailed planning takes place which has generated documents which are effective in gauging progress against targets. For instance, the detailed professional development

plan links needs to specific goals with a measurable time-frame and indications of success criteria. Data is regularly scrutinized and discussed at all levels in the school to assess progress made towards achieving goals. For example teaching has been re-aligned following a scrutiny of the data from the English Regents assessments.

The school is involved in an empowerment initiative which is developing further strategies for revising plans to meet goals. Data has been used to select a target group for improvement and a plan has been drawn up for regular diagnostic testing linked to classroom observations. This gives good evidence of an inter-disciplinary approach to the modification of goals based on interim assessments which is already having an impact on the way students are taught and tested. The approach is used with an identified group of English language learners but has not yet been used with a wider range of groups. The school is clearly committed to a process of monitoring and review which has led to well-developed practice. Although the annual goals are clear, the longer-term vision for the next stage of the school's development is not yet fully formed. This issue has not yet been fully discussed in campus-wide meetings.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: High School for Law and Public Service (HS 467)	∅	✓	+
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	