



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Manhattan Bridges High School**

**High School 542**

**525 West 50th Street  
New York  
NY 10019**

**Principal: Mirza Sanchez- Medina**

**Dates of review: February 26 - 27, 2007**

**Reviewer: Denis Pittman**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Manhattan Bridges is a bilingual high school with an enrolment of 416 students. The school provides a transition bilingual education program for English language learners who comprise 76% of the school population. A relatively high proportion of students are at the very earliest stages of gaining a facility in English. The ethnic composition of the school is 100% Latino students. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding.

As an Empowerment school it has more flexibility to make key decisions and control of resources for the school's community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting paperwork requirements.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is hard-working and has a clear vision for the development of the school.
- The school monitors the progress of students very well through its effective data gathering procedures.
- The school has a strong family ethos which is very supportive of students and staff.
- Students value the support and guidance which they receive from the school.
- The school is successful in developing English competence in students who start from low levels of language facility.
- The school has established successful and positive working relationships with the community and cultural institutions.
- The school offers a broad range of extracurricular activities to enhance the learning opportunities of students.
- There is a positive team ethos amongst the staff which is reflected in the willingness of staff to be involved in new curriculum initiatives.
- Professional development effectively supports and promotes the goals of the school.

### What the school needs to improve

- To continue to provide professional development, relating to the analysis of assessment data, to support teachers' understanding and develop instructional programs.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The school is making a significant difference to the life chances of its students. The shared educational values of the principal and assistant principal pervade the school's activities and provide a clear purpose and direction for the school. It is a school that stresses high expectations that are relevant to the student's innate abilities. The support and care of each individual child is central to the school's work. Teachers are very supportive and are willing to help and encourage students. Their commitment and hard work is reflected in the significant improvements that students make in the development of their language and literacy skills. Parents are very supportive of the school. They are very appreciative of the stimulating learning environment which is being created and value greatly the progress their children make. The curriculum is designed to reflect and build upon students' interests and capabilities; it is very successful in engaging them. The working relationship with the local community including cultural institutions is very productive in promoting the goals of the school. Given the dedicated commitment, enthusiasm and hard work of staff, the school has the capacity to sustain its established pattern of improvement.

### 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 has very effective systems for collecting a breadth of data relating to the performance and progress of individuals and groups of students. Apart from the collation of standardized scores which come from the City testing procedures, each teacher compiles a portfolio of formative assessment. The cross referencing of this data, which has been built up on the basis of recent and past assessments, gives an accurate picture of each student's achievement and progress.

As part of the school's commitment to 'Empowerment', it has made an effective start in formalizing a program of periodic assessment. The data generated from the first assessment clearly demonstrated the specific strengths and challenge for students. The data revealed that the majority of students in 10th, 11th and 12th grades had reached an overall intermediate level of performance in the three language skills tested: listening 55%, reading 42% and writing 50%. The English language proficiency test also showed that students needed help in their writing and listening skills. This data has already informed the instructional programs of teachers. The school also recognizes that the level of data analysis for 9th-grade students is not appropriate to their specific requirements as very low level English language learners. In consequence teachers are seeking new ways of generating this data from within its own resources and levels of expertise. Given the primacy of the school's focus on language acquisition, the school is very effective in supporting those students who may not have had any experience of formal education.

The school makes good provision through its intervention strategies for those students who are not only learning a new language but also have special education need. The paucity of background information about a significant proportion of students makes the comparison with past performance for individual students difficult. However the school does compare the performance of previous grades levels to provide a focus for its ongoing drive to meet and exceed its targets. There are very few bilingual schools in the city for a direct comparison of comparative performance to be made.

**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 goals of the school appropriately reflect its unique characteristics through a commitment to develop dual literacy, ensuring that 95% of students meet the promotional criteria and making attendance a high priority. There are established timeframes for achieving these goals and appropriate progress checkpoints.

The principal has worked diligently in collecting and analyzing the periodic assessment data to gain a detailed awareness of literacy needs. For example, from the analysis of students’ writing it was made evident that teachers had to continue to teach vocabulary explicitly on a daily basis. The analysis highlighted that students repeated the same words over and over and invented words. At a more general level, students had difficulty in analyzing and understanding the task set. This level of analysis provided a specific focus on inclusion in the instructional programs of all grade levels. In this context teachers have been encouraged to provide students with frequent opportunities of listening, of reading aloud, and note taking strategies from oral communication. The significant progress students are making in their language acquisition owes much to how immediately and effectively the school responds to new data to drive forward the school’s agenda of improving performance. The effective collaboration between staff is a major factor in promoting these developments. The discussions within grade levels are an important aspect of promoting common goals and plans to address the needs of students.

Students are aware of the high expectations of the principal. These expectations are conveyed to staff and parents through regular meetings about the progress of students. . She is sensitive to, and openly identifies with, the issues families face and passionately advocates the importance of the ‘legacy’ of a good education based on language acquisition. Students are appreciative of the extra help that is given to them by staff in order for them to make improvements in their work. The useful data exchange of information between teaching colleagues and some of the parent body enables the school’s goals to be reinforced. This was demonstrated, for example, in the support given to students and parents to encourage the use of English in the home environment.

**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**

**This area of the schools work is well developed.**

The school carefully selects and provides a standards based curriculum, tailoring it well to meet the learning needs of the student body, three quarters of whom are English language learners. A curriculum and instruction committee effectively evaluates the curriculum in consultation with the principal. There is a carefully considered emphasis on materials in support of the school's goal to promote literacy, employing scaffolding techniques to promote learning in English, Spanish and content areas. Curriculum decisions are strategically based on available data and last year, for example, the committee determined that students were ready to begin an integrated course in biochemistry which was concurrent with their literacy development. The school rightly recognizes the need to rationalise the number of curriculum programmes that have been operating in the school currently. Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. Specific attention to the differentiated needs of students is apparent in decisions to change classes as students develop greater competencies and to change block schedules to make more time for subject instruction.

Budgeting decisions effectively are based on student learning needs. Grants are sought to provide additional funding. This is reflected in the range of technology which supports the curriculum. Every classroom has a smart board, lap top and desktop that are used to add variety to the teaching activities. Staffing criteria are clearly related to the needs of the school. As indicated above, scheduling decisions are flexible to accommodate the changes in language development of students.

Students are actively involved in their learning experiences. There is an extensive co curricular and extra curricular program including clubs, student government, extended academic day learning, tutoring, sports and internships with partner organizations. The diverse needs of students are provided for during and after the school day in classes that include Advanced Placement macroeconomics and Advanced Placement Spanish literature. This year it was determined that more needed to be done for students who have experienced interrupted education. To do so, a rich program including phonics based word recognition and beginning writing and literacy has become an important learning center in the school. A program with El Museo del Barrio supports the arts curriculum. The commitment and enjoyment of school are reflected in the improving student attendance rates which are over 90%. The school celebrates this achievement through appropriate awards and the reinforcement of its importance during assembly sessions.

**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 carefully selects staff using criteria mainly related to teachers' competence in Spanish, their subject specialism, their high expectations of students and a commitment to professional learning. The school is successful in building this staff profile and appointing staff who share the school's values. Professional development programs have been successful in raising the confidence and competence of the staff. The principal recognizes the importance of professional development to promote literacy skills in a variety of contexts and is creative in the use of resources and time to ensure that an adequate

provision is made for this purpose. Staff are very supportive of each other and willingly share ideas. For example, many classes benefit from the introduction of English as a second language strategies to enhance the learning experience within the classroom. Staff are confident in the use of computers and laptops; these skills enhance the quality of instructional activities.

The principal is respected for her professional knowledge and her capacity to make change happen successfully. She has created a supportive environment where staff feel valued. The principal and the assistant principal regularly observe teaching and give constructive feedback about the outcomes of these observations. They are fully aware of the strengths and areas for development of all teachers. They plan collaboratively along with other key staff, such as contents leaders, to improve instruction. A particular focus has been on the use of genre studies, texts and examples to address the requirements of the Regents standardised assessment. Teachers have been modelling strategies for dealing with the facets of the genre. These scaffolding strategies have been successful in supporting students in their reading, critical thinking and writing skills.

The school is welcoming to students, parents and visitors. It is managed well and effective systems and procedures ensure that the school runs smoothly. Students know where to go and what to do. The school works well with outside agencies and institutions. It maintains strong ties with the Museum of Modern Art. The outcome of these links has been a more positive integration of art into the curriculum. The Young Citizens Centre provides an effective extra curricular programme in relation to leadership. Parents are encouraged to take part in the school. The school is becoming increasingly successful in promoting greater family participation and support to its open communication.

**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 has a detailed and Comprehensive Education Plan which is the focus for what it is seeking to achieve in supporting bilingual students. Teachers are actively engaged in collaborative work in setting the goals and targets for the school. The plan outlines how the needs of all students are to be met including effective intervention strategies and programs for those students in greatest need, for example students who had no experience of formal education. The school reviews the outcomes of its plans well. The analysis and use of data collected in these reviews is central to the strategies for improvement the detail of which ranges from issues such as achieving consistency in the use of rubrics to much broader issues such as the improvement of students' writing and listening skills. Staff at all levels are actively encouraged to take responsibility for assessing and analyzing students' progress so as to identify requisite changes and take remedial action where necessary. The school has shown itself to be adaptive in its use of assessment procedures. For example, the introduction of the periodic assessments software program has produced a substantial evidence base in relation to students' competencies in language skills. Equally it has been flexible enough in its thinking to determine that some of the outcomes such as the profile for grade 9 are not appropriate to its needs. The effective review procedures which the school has put in place show that it has the capacity to sustain change and improvement.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Manhattan Bridges High School (HS 542)</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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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