

**City As School**

**City As School  
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# City As School

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## Part 1: The School Context

### Information about the school

City-As-School an alternative school for students alienated by traditional classrooms. It has 709 students on its roll in grades 11 and 12. However, students are able to stay longer than two years to achieve their high school diploma. Forty-five students have special educational needs while 10 qualify for support for their English language skills. Students come from mainly African-American, Hispanic and Caucasian ethnic backgrounds and small proportion from Asian-American heritages.

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## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- A high proportion of students graduate and go to college.
- Attendance is improving each year because of the attention it receives. There are no suspensions.
- Relationships are very well-developed, giving disaffected students another chance to realize their potential.
- Leadership empowers students and staff so all are part of the educative process: all opinions are valued.
- The students make rapid progress because they have commitment to the school and their program of work.
- The school's strong philosophy and the way it "lives" its core principles of developing students into independent young people means that personal development is considerable.
- Students' individual progress is followed closely and there is an emphasis on life skills, good health personal growth.
- The expertise teachers show, in making lessons interesting, engaging students and dealing with current issues, contribute significantly to students' performance and progress.
- Students have positive views of the school and employers and other stakeholders are very supportive.
- The internship program gives real purpose to students' lives linking positively to their graduation: it is the way the school achieves its mission of "learning by doing".

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop students' writing skills to match their verbal skills, and improve their presentation and handwriting skills.
- Supplement numerical data with more examples of qualitative data to give a complete picture of students' progress and pinpoint areas for further improvement in student interventions.
- Continue to develop and implement strategies for improving student attendance

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### Part 3: Main Findings

#### Overall Evaluation

##### The school has well-developed systems

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria.

**Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.**

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

City as School is unique. The school is one of a small number that has a waiver from the State in relation to Regents examinations, except in English Language Arts. As a result there is only limited data with which to make direct comparison with other schools. Students complete individual portfolios and courses of work about subjects agreed with the school's teaching staff. Internships are a central feature of the curriculum. These long-term placements for students are with companies and organizations in New York. Students have to meet stringent criteria in order to pass all these important elements of their work.

From a low entry point, where students usually join the school over-age and under-credited; the progress of students is well developed. The school has an outstanding graduation rate of currently 93%. This success is partly based on the way the teachers negotiate work with students, for example the portfolio work. As a result the tasks students have to complete, that contribute to their graduation, motivate and interest them. A significant indicator is that 84% of students are present on a typical day: this shows that the great majority of students feel that the curriculum is relevant and worthwhile. The school has well-developed systems to compare its past performance with the present. Results over time show as consistently high and around 85% go on to post secondary education.

Students' work is moderated effectively and there is agreement on standards for the students' portfolios within the school. The staff is very experienced in doing this, but there is no moderation between different schools to validate judgments further. Letters of support from companies and organizations speak glowingly of the success of the internships.

There is a well-developed system for collecting data about individual student's progress and attainments. This is used effectively to identify their specific needs and to follow their progress over time. The school is effective in identifying students who need additional support and it takes creative action to meet these needs. Students confirm that the school, which has the balance between caring for students and demanding of them about right, meets their often-complex needs.

The school looks in detail at individual student data and to a proficient extent at whole school trends in data, such as by gender, ethnic group or age on entry to the school to discover if groups are, for example, underachieving. There is no complacency; the

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school carries well-considered self-reviews periodically. The University of Pittsburgh carried out an in depth study in 1999, which confirmed the efficacy of the programs.

**Quality Statement 2: 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.**

From well below average levels of attainment on joining the school, well-developed teaching ensures that students' achievement is good by the time they leave school. Students make good progress because they enjoy learning. They feel empowered by the philosophy of 'learning by doing.' Their work in school, and through the wide range of learning experiences made available by the school, are relevant to their future lives. This is one of the main reasons why students are successful in their studies. However, students' writing, presentation and handwriting skills do not always match their verbal skills.

The school has found ways to motivate students beyond just the acquisition of credits. Students' progress is successfully accelerated by teachers who share a common philosophy, such as to give students another chance to succeed.

Students find the work done to complete their portfolios and internships is interesting and stimulating. The goals each student has are demanding. For example, all students have a 'LEAP' (Learning Experience Activity Package) for each of their internships. There are numerous and wide ranging goals within each LEAP, which students have to attain. They explain how they have done this in detail as part of their finished work, which is then assessed by teachers.

Students are very clear about what they have to do in order to graduate. There are well-developed systems for monitoring students' progress towards the goals they have agreed with staff. Teachers look closely at their goals for each credit and, for example, identify where students need to do more in order to improve their grades. The academic needs of individual students are met through extra support when they need it. The assessment process guides what is taught very well at an individual student level.

Teachers and advisors make well-developed use of the full range of data available to them. Teachers know the students well and they identify any who are at risk of falling behind in their work and support them. The advisory system is well-developed. Students' special educational needs and additional language needs are met effectively because the school recognizes that, 'children learn in different ways.'

Parents receive regular reports about their children's standards and progress that are broad and informative.

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**Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

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

The uniqueness of CAS is exemplified by the use of internships, or resource as they are called by the school. Internships drive the structure of the school and are central to the school's curriculum: they focus teaching approaches and have an extremely strong impact on students' performance and progress. This is because, through the internships, the school provides an individualized curriculum for all its students. It is here, therefore, where the school's uniqueness is most evident: individual support means that the school selects the curriculum on the basis of how well it meets each student's individual needs. Thus, not only aligned with its high expectations but also gives students a meaningful experience that contributes well to their performance and progress.

A great deal of time and effort is allocated to ensuring that leaders, advisors, resource coordinators and the resource person all have a well-developed understanding of how well students are meeting their goals.

Scheduling, staffing and budget decisions are driven by the school's philosophy and structure. A central thrust of its work is establishing and keeping high quality internships. Thus, the deployment of staff, money and time are well-developed and derive directly from the demand of the internship program. The telling factor here is the strong impact the internship program has on the performance and progress of students.

Significantly, the performance and progress of students also shows in their attitudes to their work and engagement. Teachers have considerable expertise in making lessons interesting, engaging students and dealing with personal issues sensitively. They know their students very well: teachers value their students and have the highest respect for them as individuals. As a result students have extremely positive views of the school. They speak about the "freedom to follow their interests" and the school having "a warm environment". One student, commenting on the way they are treated like adults said "all the responsibility is on you" and another that there was "no excuse for failing".

The school highly values its external partners. The companies and organizations that provide the internships are very supportive: moreover, many have written to the school testifying to students' high levels of motivation and engagement. The school recognizes that it needs to develop even further its range of high quality internships but that does not diminish the impact they have currently on achieving its stated academic goals.

**Quality Statement 4: 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.**

Leadership is well-developed. It empowers students and staff so that all are part of the education process: all opinions are valued and all have a part to play in the school's development. There is great passion for the school's values and a very strong

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educational philosophy that drives and defines what the school does and how it goes about its work. As a result everyone shares its goals and aspirations.

The strong commitment of leaders, advisors and faculty is exemplified by the way decisions are made and improvements effected. Staff meetings and committees discuss particular issues affecting students' performance and progress and identify strategies for improvement. Notes from meetings show how highly the leadership values the commitment of staff and the high expectations that teachers have of their students. But these also show that the capacity of the school to make changes where necessary and that this is a part of a process of continuous improvement.

It is no mean feat for a school of this complexity to run smoothly. Procedures for ensuring that internships are properly managed are well defined and resource coordinators visit students regularly and frequently. As a result, the school has a good knowledge of where they are with their studies. This is supported well by LEAPs.

**Quality Statement 5: 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 well-developed systems to diagnose students' progress, alter and amend learning programs and intervene appropriately. The individualized curriculum provides good opportunities for learning to be broken down into manageable chunks and make revisions to programs quickly and efficiently. Students have a wide range of interests, skills, capabilities and needs and as result comparisons across classrooms are not always possible or significant. However, the school uses the opportunities of the individualized curriculum to compare a students' performance over time through data and information such as credits awarded, performance as internees, attendance and progress in classroom-based activities.

The individualized curriculum also allows the school to adjust programs so that they meet the needs of students. Mostly this is through making sure that internships are matched well to students: were there are difficulties; advisors and resource coordinators are quick to adjust programs or intervene.

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### Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

<b>Quality Statement 1: Monitoring Performance and Progress: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data</b>	o	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated picture of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are: (1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, math, and other important academic subjects			X
1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school			X
1.3 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, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
<b>Quality Statement 2: Academic Improvement Goals and Plans</b>	o	✓	+
2.1 Using data, the school sets demanding, objectively measurable, goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and it develops 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 warranting attention.		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. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably 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
<b>Quality Statement 3: Instructional Programs, Practices, &amp; Arrangements; Student Engagement</b>	o	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and based on the curriculum's capacity to generate useful interim data about progress towards goals.			X
3.2 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
3.2 Scheduling decisions are driven by the time and resources needed to obtain and use performance and progress data, set high goals, and implement and continuously improve the school's plans for reaching stated goals.			X
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the time and resources needed to obtain and use performance and progress data, set high goals, and implement and continuously improve the school's plans for reaching stated goals.			X
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the resources needed to obtain and use performance and progress data, set high goals, and implement and continuously improve the school's plans for reaching stated goals.			X
3.5 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
3.6 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
3.7 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.8 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies exist and are routinely utilized for the purpose of achieving stated academic goals.			X

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<b>Quality Statement 4: Staff Selection, Leadership, &amp; Capacity Building</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</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.			<b>X</b>
4.2 The leadership team is respected and has capacity to effect change.			<b>X</b>
4.3 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and they are generally followed.			<b>X</b>
4.4 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.			<b>X</b>
4.5 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.			<b>X</b>
4.6 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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 5: Recognition, Intervention, &amp; Adjustments</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</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 reaching stated goals.			<b>X</b>
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.		<b>X</b>	
5.3 Information generated by interim 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.			<b>X</b>
5.4 Each plan's final outcome, and the aggregate and comparative outcomes of similar plans, drive each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, including the revision of plans designed to be implemented again.			<b>X</b>