



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Manhattan School for Career Development

Public School 751

**113 East 4th Street
New York
NY 10003**

Principal: Tobias Weissman

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Reviewer: Jeff Plumb

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Manhattan School for Career Development serves 278 students aged 14 years to 21 years with moderate to severe learning difficulties. Fifty-five percent of students are Black and a further 41% are Hispanic, the remainder being White, Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American. There are 15 English language learners; the predominant mother tongue language is Spanish. There are very significantly more boys enrolled than girls.

The school is unique within District 75 in that students may be enrolled in the school and a proprietary school which confers a New York State Education Department Trade School Diploma. This adds significant weight to the existing individual education plan diploma. Fifteen students participate in either culinary arts training or building maintenance. The school is a 100% alternate assessment school. The driving and overarching goal of the school is to secure job placements for students who complete the four year program. There are no grades or traditional classes. The school uses 15 sites, including two transition sites.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's leadership is effective.
- The Vocational Educational Services for Individual Disabilities Program is outstanding in supporting young people in to meaningful work.
- The number of students who secure and sustain employment at the end of the four year program is impressive, and rising.
- The arts enrichment program promotes enjoyment in learning.
- The 'Save Room' is effectively used to support students with complex emotional needs.
- The practical workshops for food, wood, printing and photography motivate students and help them to develop a sense of purpose.
- The established link with the Gay Men's Health Crisis Center supports students' practical skills and the development of positive attitudes and social responsibility.
- The use of data to find suitable housing for students supports the sustainability of work placements.
- The rich quality of display celebrating students' work enhances their self-esteem.
- The use of data to suitably allocate students to work placements and the flexibility in the planning to get this activity right is a major strength.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve communication with parents.
- Engage students and parents and caregivers more directly in the process of setting achievement goals.
- Ensure greater consistency in instructional practice so that activities in lessons are better matched to students' needs.
- Continue to improve attendance and participation in alternate assessments.
- Ensure that the tools to measure success on the school Comprehensive Education Plan are more directly linked to student outcomes.
- Improve conferencing with students to raise achievement in reading and mathematics.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Since his appointment, six months ago, the principal has managed significant change which has benefited the students. Parents say, “The physical appearance of the school has been transformed, and it is now a positive learning environment”. Students say, “The principal believes in us and wants us to succeed”. He has undertaken a robust analysis of attendance data and participation rates in alternate assessments across all sites. Decisive action, focused on students with poor attendance, has paid dividends. Some faculty members have, under his leadership, gained a new lease of enthusiasm to develop their instructional practice. Communication between administrators has improved and the assistant principals are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

Certain systems, such as the monthly meeting of counselors, aimed at improving the quality of guidance for students, are at too early a stage of development to measure impact for students. There is a system for monitoring the quality of instructional practice, but it does not focus sharply enough on the way in which teachers conference with students to raise their achievement. A few teachers are not sufficiently focused on ensuring that students receive a quality education. Consequently, this is a proficient school. However, under the direction of the new principal, in cooperation with his administrators, the capacity for further improvement is promising.

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 proficient.

The school gathers an extensive range of qualitative and quantifiable data to build a holistic picture of each student. The cabinet is concerned with tracking the progress of skills relevant to enable students to secure and sustain employment. Data is used effectively to inform suitable work placements for students. The school has an impressive track record in enabling students with complex emotional and behavioral difficulties in getting and holding down jobs. Data is not used to understand the progress and performance of ethnic groups or English language learners as a distinct group. However, the very few students at an early stage of learning to speak English are assigned a bi-lingual assistant. Students with speech and language difficulties are assessed and data is used to track their progress weekly in a pull-out model with specialist speech teachers.

Good use is made of data in respect of other categories of interest. Data is gathered about housing conditions and used to trigger social service intervention to ensure student entitlement to quality housing, an essential pre-requisite to holding down a job. Guidance counselors and transition teachers identify students who have difficulties with independent travel and develop programs to facilitate their independence. Data has been gathered about trigger times for suspensions and used to shape plans to reduce them.

There is no similar school or traditional classroom model. However, the school compares its past performance in respect of participation in alternate assessments. Data has been gathered about participation rates across sites and decisive action taken to improve participation. This is successful, but the school is not complacent about further improvement. Data is used to compare performance in different English language arts groups and professional development has been targeted at English language arts teachers where groups of students have been found to lag behind.

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 proficient.

The views of all stakeholders in the school community are audited before setting the long-term goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan. However, the questionnaire used is not sufficiently parent- and student-friendly, so too few of them respond to it and thus do not contribute to the goals set. Collaborative teams meet regularly and use data to set immediate goals and timeframes for reaching them, but these goals are not always sharply linked to accelerating student learning. English language arts teachers and the coach flagged that there was insufficient time for teaching the Wilson program, without demonstrating the adverse impact this had on student achievement. More time has been allocated, but a weakness in student conferencing does not support students sharing responsibility for their own learning and so impedes accelerating student learning in reading.

Student goals are shaped by individual education plans and assessment tests on entry to the school. Data is used effectively to place them on a specific area of vocational study, linked to their career interest, at the end of their first year. At collaborative team meetings, data is used to set goals to improve attendance, behavior, and to trigger emotional support for students. These goals successfully equip students for the world of work. Related service staff and administrators ceaselessly set and re-set student work placement goals to ensure maximum success in securing long-term worthwhile employment for them.

An organizational structure exists to gather information from parents and students, and to involve them in setting goals to raise achievement. A few parents and students consider that there is a minority of teachers who do not listen to them. The principal and his fellow administrators work hard to create a culture where all teachers care passionately for students. The vast majority of the school community is driven by goals and plans to ensure that even more students secure a footing on a career path when they leave 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 proficient.

The curriculum is unique. Following students spending a year in a range of vocational workshops, data is used to align them to a particular vocational study program with clear career goals. The majority of students who complete the program by entering a transition site in their fourth year achieve the ultimate goal of secure employment. The principal has

made changes to the curriculum to reduce the early dropout rate. Recent enrichment through an exciting arts program has improved attendance and commitment to the main program for disaffected students.

Teachers are held to account and work diligently to differentiate their instruction based on data about students' needs. This is better in the vocational subjects and mathematics than in English language arts. Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are driven by data and relevant to the school's priorities. Updated software and printing machinery have been purchased to raise student achievement. The administration has been robust in moving instructors from off-sites when they have not performed to maximum capacity. Modifications are made to schedules to align students' instructional needs mid-term.

Differentiation of work placements is outstanding. Vocational teachers know their students well, as evidenced by the teacher on the building maintenance program who has encouraged a student to sit a federal test to gain employment with the military. In the workshops and on work placements students are enthusiastic about learning. Engagement in English language arts lessons is more variable because activities are not always well matched to students' needs.

The development of students' independent living and work skills is good. The majority of students behave well. They say, "We feel safe at school and have a trusted adult to talk with about any problems". The school successfully teaches them the importance of networking in the work place. Attendance is high priority and recent decisive actions taken have seen it rise. Absences are followed up by telephone on the same day.

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 proficient.

The principal is respected by staff, students and parents. Students say, "He listens and connects to us, but is on our case when needs be". Effective management systems ensure that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Teachers are hired on the basis of their subject and vocational expertise and commitment to working with students who experience significant barriers to education. This is typified by the hiring of a licensed attorney to teach the youth and law class.

Professional development is based on students' and teachers' needs. Faculty meetings are used to train staff in the completion of the alternate assessment reports. A staff representative attends all relevant District 75 professional development, but there is an issue in finding time for that training to be turn-keyed. The principal and assistant principals frequently observe lessons and offer constructive feedback to teachers as to how they can improve their instructional practice. However, their observations do not hone in sharply on how conference logs are written and used by teachers to inform their planning to raise student achievement. Planning, analysis of how well programs are going and revisions take place in teams regularly, but too often they are not sufficiently formalized to be efficient and determine decisive actions for improvement.

Partnership with outside agencies to achieve the overarching goal of equipping students for the world of work and finding them employment are outstanding. The link with the Vocational Education Service for Individual Disabilities for students at an earlier age than is typically found through New York City is excellent. It triggers funding and enables good

instructional and hands-on building construction training. The partnership with the Gay Men's Health Crisis Center is innovative and benefits students very significantly. Those students engaged in the project develop work-related culinary skills and learn how to prepare balanced meals suitable for clients with HIV alongside how to combat homophobic attitudes.

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.

Reflection and critical self-review, until recently, took place on an ad hoc basis and was rarely based on hard data. Monitoring and evaluation of practice by the recently appointed principal has resulted in data to inform decisive actions to manage change and effect improvement. Some actions have already begun to take hold and are making cutting edge differences for students. For example, the principal's discovery that students who had been absent were not immediately welcomed on their return has resulted in the team of counselors being mobilized to greet students every morning when they arrive at school. Attendance is now improving. Other initiatives, such as the implementation of the positive behavior intervention strategy, are at too early a stage of development to be evaluated. Based on what has been achieved so far, the capacity for improvement bodes well for the future.

The principal inherited the current Comprehensive Education Plan. Not all stakeholders in the school community have ownership of the goals in this plan. In addition, the evaluative tools to measure the success of the goals set do not focus sharply enough on outcomes for students. For example, the goals which focus on the development of the Wilson Reading Scheme and small group tutoring in mathematics lack reference to evaluative tools to measure specific achievement outcomes for students. However, the school is very successful at flexibly planning for and constantly re-aligning student work placements to enable them to get their foot on the first rung of the employment ladder. The principal's vision for improved flexibility in planning to ensure increased student retention in the early years of the program has fired up the imagination of the vast majority of staff. They have begun to think more innovatively and plan more creatively to reduce student dropout during the early years of the program. There is a strong determination on the part of the administrators that their students will succeed.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Manhattan School for Career Development (PS 751)	∅	✓	+
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	