



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Stephen A. Halsey Junior High School**

**Junior High School 157**

**102 64 Street  
Queens  
NY 11375**

**Principal: Mr Vincent Suraci**

**Dates of review: November 30 - December 1, 2006**

**Reviewer: Margaret Lee**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The school is a junior high school with 1103 students in grades 6 through 9. Forty-one percent of students are White, including newly arrived students from Russia and surrounding countries, with 25% Asian and Pacific Islanders, 20% Hispanic, 13% Black and 1% American Indian/Alaskan. Eight percent of students are English language learners, which is lower than similar and City schools. The school has 16% special education students in both self-contained and collaborative classes, which is typical of the proportion found in other City schools. Attendance at 91% is below the City average.

The school is currently undertaking a feasibility study to determine continuity of grade 9 in the school. The principal has begun his second year.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is an inspiring educational leader who in a short time has empowered staff to be accountable for learning outcomes.
- The school embraces the learning needs of all students through the use of in-depth assessment based instruction and supportive guidance care.
- The school is effectively organized to ensure that teachers get to know the students well from year to year.
- Professional development is an inherent part of all teachers' work with teachers' meetings being used very productively.
- Data is used well to identify students who would benefit from additional teaching in the after-school program.
- Teachers work enthusiastically together and demonstrate a committed approach to improving their work.
- The students are focused and involved in their learning tasks because lessons are interesting.
- The parents are considered a valuable part of the school community and their contributions are welcomed.
- The classrooms are attractively presented with many teaching aides, resources and examples of students' work, so that they reflect the school's high expectations.

### What the school needs to improve

- Use data to inform group work instruction and to target student conferencing in all subjects.
- Establish interim and end of year performance goals for individual students and use them to set class, grade, subject and whole-school goals that can be measured and monitored.
- Develop the process to monitor and review progress towards long-term and interim school goals, and include representatives from the whole school community.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

This junior high school is improving rapidly as a result of newly-established systems for assessing and using data to improve behavior, the curriculum and instruction. The school has reached this point in a very short time as a result of inspiring leadership that has supported all staff to improve instruction through a renewed pedagogical knowledge, drive and support. All members of staff are dedicated, work very well together, and find satisfaction in their students' progress and successes. The students feel valued and are appreciative of progress that they make. Successes are celebrated with school spirit days, and opportunities for student leadership support their personal development effectively. The parent body is very supportive of the school and the new and better ways it is supporting students.

Professional development regularly occurs at grade and faculty levels and is focused on the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. The teachers share ideas and are thoroughly monitored and reviewed in their work. Curriculum plans are paced and reviewed in timely ways. The school has a strong sense of being a learning community where adults are unafraid to explore ideas and ways to improve.

### 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 gathers a good amount of data from formal and informal assessments, for example, the Grow Report and Princeton Review materials, which give a clear understanding of each individual student's performance in English, mathematics and science. It has recently introduced the America's Choice program which is helping the school to gather data about each student's progress in English language arts and leading to more differentiated instruction in classes.

The school analyses assessments and test results particularly well to identify students who are performing at level 1 and a low level 2. It uses the information to plan and deliver effective additional sessions and programs to help them reach the expected standards. As a result, more students are reaching level 2 and level 3 each year in English language arts, mathematics and science.

The school carries out a good range of formal assessments which gives a clear picture of how well individual special education students do over the course of each grade. The data is used effectively to monitor the progress and intervention programs and enable many of this group to make good progress. English language learners are assessed frequently and the data used effectively to give push-in support in classes to enable them to make suitable progress. Many of this group of students are new to the country and so are not

yet performing at expected levels. The school continues to look closely at this group of students' performance as part of the work of its academic intervention and pupil progress teams.

Data is used to compare the performance of subjects and the progress of students in different classes and grades each year. The performance of students in different ethnic groups is analyzed closely to make sure they are making the same progress as others in their classes and to put programs and support in place to guide their learning.

**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.**

Since his appointment, the principal has shared his long-term vision for the school's future and outlined his goals with staff. He has worked closely with the assistant principals and coaches to establish the workshop model of instruction in English and science. This has been influential in supporting staff to routinely use observations and assessments to monitor students' progress against state and City standards for each class and grade level. The analysis of this data outlines for teachers each student's next steps. These have not yet been translated into individual goals for each student to achieve at the end of the year. As a result, these are not suitably measurable goals to enable the school to monitor whether its actions plans for each class, grade and subject are as effective as they can be.

The expectation that all students will do well is certainly the goal that all members of the school community are working towards. Special education students and those performing at level 1 or 2 have targeted learning plans. Teachers in each grade meet weekly to monitor and review this group of students' progress and plan collaboratively the following week's work. Parents take a keen interest in student development and the school's open door policy encourages them to come into school regularly to talk about their children's progress.

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

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

Teachers have worked well together to produce curriculum pacing calendars that guide staff to teach consistently across and within grade levels and which meet individual students' needs. English as a second language teachers and classroom teachers work collaboratively to plan a curriculum which enables these students to learn with their peers in heterogeneous classes. The curriculum is adjusted to help these students acquire the vocabulary they need in subjects other than English. Paraprofessionals are very attentive and involved in the learning of each child.

All teaching and learning decisions in the school are based on assessment and other data. The assistant principals and coaches help each class teacher to analyze the data in their teacher assessment notes to help group work instruction and to target conferencing

activities. Through faculty meetings, one-to-one discussions and visits to classrooms, the principal and assistant principals check that this work are completed consistently. As a result, teachers have a raised understanding of the importance of using data to plan instruction and are becoming more accountable for the students' progress in their classes, although planned differentiation is not a consistent feature across all classes.

Students benefit from the school's strong emphasis on balanced literacy and the recognition of its importance in promoting knowledge and skills in every subject. All classrooms have established learning centers and group work stimulated by a rich array of resources and teaching materials. Instructional practices and content are changed and modified according to data-based information about student learning. The emphasis on acceleration of learning pervades school practices and processes, with differentiated instruction occurring mainly in English language arts, because assessment is not used so well in other subjects. Care for students' success is strong, illustrated by the pleasure all members of staff take in seeing students develop new skills and improve their progress.

The school has rescheduled sessions into 90 minute blocks to extend students' stamina and concentration on learning. The school is structured so that each teacher is responsible for their permanent learning area. Decisions about budget allocations are based on the needs of instruction. Resources support learning well. There is a rich range of classroom books in the well-resourced library and an excellent technology classroom with computers for each child. They use these resources well in consolidating their learning from classroom teaching.

Learning and behavior routines are positively reinforced and emphasized at the beginning of the school year. The school acknowledges that students' social and personal development is important, and so celebrates their work and contributions positively. This builds a strong school spirit where all students feel valued. Students are interested and involved in their learning tasks. They work calmly and diligently. Students are able to articulate what they are learning but as yet do not know their goals well enough.

Attendance is high priority and the school has rigorous procedures for encouraging good attendance and punctuality.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

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

The principal in his second year has established a collegial team spirit, with staff cooperating well together to produce productive learning environments for all students. Staff are selected to ensure teambuilding at a faculty level, suitability for grade level and with skills and talents as teachers to enable the students to freely interact and take risks in the pursuit of their learning. Teachers fully support his efforts in striving for student improvement and understand how this is to be achieved. They endorse school practices that place emphasis on enabling students to reach their potential.

Professional development is planned to meet individual teacher's needs and the needs of the school. The school uses its own staff expertise in delivering training on certain aspects of the school's work, for example coaches training teachers how to introduce the balanced literacy program into school. Faculty meetings give additional opportunity for teachers to

talk about recent initiatives and to share ideas and good practice. In this way, teachers learn from each other.

The principal, assistant principals and coaches work together very effectively to effect change. They visit classrooms regularly to observe and join in with teaching so they know exactly what is going on in each classroom. The principal, assistant principals and coaches review students' work regularly and evaluate how much progress students are making. They are highly respected by staff, students and parents because of their direct involvement in teaching and leadership to improve classroom practices. They all model lessons to show teachers precisely what their vision is for differentiated instruction and to present new teaching programs and strategies.

The school day operates peacefully and smoothly. It is well organized and transition from one program to another is responsibly managed by students within a structured system that has been put into place to enable this to occur. As one parent said, 'the school is quiet now'.

The school works collaboratively with a varied range of organizations, parents and the local community to enrich students' personal and academic development. For example, the CHAMPS program encourages students to become physically fit while the Midori and Partners as Arts Partners programs give students many artistic opportunities to learn a musical instrument and perform concerts in the community venues. Parents are represented on the school leadership team and so take part in the decision-making process.

**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 with well developed features.**

The school is very good at regularly and routinely monitoring students' individual development and progress. The process is particularly well developed in the younger grade classrooms where monitoring of progress is part of the teachers' daily work with students. Teachers monitor their students' classroom progress very thoroughly by the maintenance of binders with all students' results and their teacher assessment notes.

Student progress is given high priority in the open and honest discussions the weekly faculty team and academic intervention service meetings, and monthly pupil progress team meetings. School leaders and faculty members all review progress towards student goals. However, faculty and school goals are not so readily apparent. There is an understanding that the school works towards the improvement in all students and this occurs, but this emphasis is without documentation and measurable targets. The use of diagnostic measurable interim school and faculty goals has had less emphasis, as the priority has been to improve and meet classroom goals and improve student outcomes. Therefore the school is unable to monitor its own performance rigorously enough.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Stephen A Halsey School (JHS 157)</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	