



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Benjamin Cardozo High School

High School 415

57-00 223rd Street

Queens

NY 11364

Principal: Rick Hallman

Dates of review: November 27 - 29, 2006

Reviewer: Margaret Lee

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school has 4204 students from grades 9 through 12 and approximately 300 staff members. Forty-four percent of students are Asian, 14% Hispanic, 19% Black and 24% White. Six percent of students are English language learners, and just over 2% are special education students.

The school provides for Regents examinations, Advanced Placement courses, honours courses and college level studies. There are also three Magnet Programs offered to students; The Da Vinci Science/Math Research Institute, The Mentor Law and Humanities Program and Performing Dance Program. There are also bridge programs with other schools.

Student attendance is 91% which is in line with that of similar schools and above average for City-wide schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Adults work diligently to ensure that students experience success.
- The principal is an educational leader whose approach builds ownership in staff members and makes parents and others feel a valued part of the school community.
- Graduation rates are very high.
- Guidance counselors demonstrate a dedicated and highly committed approach to their work with students.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and experienced in their study areas.
- The students work responsibly and are motivated by the school's high expectations.
- Struggling students are provided with alternative opportunities beyond the regular school program to become successful achievers.
- The school building is clean, attractively presented and well organized.
- The parents and students are proud of the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the understanding among all teachers of the benefits of the use of data to guide instruction.
- Increase the use of data for differentiated teaching and learning in classrooms.
- Increase opportunities for teachers to share good teaching strategies.
- Make sure that goals and plans are measurable and have interim targets against which progress can be evaluated.
- Open up more opportunities for the students to be involved in school improvement.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school, with some areas that are proficient.

This is a high-performing school which successfully achieves high graduation rates for a wide range of students. The principal consciously works to ensure that students feel a sense of belonging, in part through the Magnet program. Where students are in danger of not progressing well enough, the school modifies existing programs, adds new ones and prepares individualized learning plans for particular students. Students are provided with many rich opportunities to become mature, responsible and capable young adults.

The strong leadership of the principal permeates the school. The school is well managed based upon a generous sharing of information, openness to alternative approaches for improvement and reasoned explanations. Teachers report that there is a 'niche for all' in the school. Staff work collaboratively for the benefit of students. Assistant principals provide professional support to staff. While structured professional dialogue occurs regularly, the translation into practice is not consistent across the school.

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 uses a wide range of assessments and tests which provide teachers with a full picture of each student. The principal and assistant principals are not only concerned to monitor the performance levels the students reach each year but also to track the rate of progress over time of individuals and groups of students. The school is data-rich with a comprehensive range of information. The principal uses the school computerized database of student results to monitor progress and to compare the outcomes of one class with another. The principal ensures that all assistant principals and teachers are able to interpret the data accurately to make the right decisions when planning learning programs and teaching approaches.

Each teacher has information about their students' level of progress by the first six weeks of school. Teachers assess students on reading levels, content knowledge and the skills expected to meet performance levels and the requirements of course completion with some teachers maintaining very thorough and informative files.

The results of each grade-level and faculty are analyzed by ethnic and gender groups. The progress of special education students to meet their individual education plans is monitored regularly. Progressive records are kept, shared and discussed with counselors and teachers. The school examines all factors that influence any student's development and progress. Factors are examined to identify those students needing academic preparation prior to beginning high school and the programs of intervention begin early in

grade 9. The impact of this analysis is seen in students' performance which is above that of similar schools, and in the low drop-out rate.

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.

All staff work consistently to maintain the school's high performance levels as one of the best public high schools in New York City. Teachers set goals with their classes and contribute to faculty goals. The school continually emphasizes the high expectation that all students will become graduating students. These expectations are seen in the aspirations of individual students, classroom levels set by the teachers and faculty levels to ensure worthwhile content. However, the goals set do not have interim measures against which to judge progress.

The school has well-established organizational structures that encourage collaborative decision-making for teachers about their students' performance levels and academic weaknesses. Student performance data is the basis for modifications of teaching within required course designs. After thorough analysis of the data in relation to ethnicity and gender, in response to the changing student population and the increased range of performance levels, the school has introduced a number of programs to meet these needs.

The 'Cardozo Growth' program has been established to ensure that low-performing students are successful. These students are responding very positively to this program. Students feel valued and respected, and some students make the transition back into school-wide programs. Special education students' progress is well managed through the monitoring of individualized learning plans.

The school has effective systems for English language learners. The school offers bi-lingual programs in science and social studies. Students programmed into an additional foreign language course broaden their language experience. The English language learners' director works well with class teachers and guidance counselors to identify and monitor classroom support for individual students. The majority of these students progress well to complete their studies.

The guidance counselors review all student data for academic achievement twice per year and discuss progress with relevant teachers. These student files are maintained over the course of four years by the same counselor for the same students. These relationships have a very positive impact on improvements in student participation and academic achievement. The school works consistently to embrace all students' needs, and there is a limited number of drop-out students, the lowest in the district. The parents are kept well informed 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 the learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The school offers many programs and courses providing students with a wide range of levels of study to meet their need. These include opportunities for advanced placement, honors courses and any one of three magnet courses. There are also shared instruction programs with colleges, for example in medicine. Within each of these courses there is a wide selection of subjects to meet the various interests of students.

Department staff cooperate well to produce relevant curriculum content and teaching strategies to ensure that students are continually progressing in their learning. There is a wide variety of teaching styles. Good flexible arrangements further enable students to move between courses and programs to accelerate their learning. Teachers give individual feedback to students both verbally and in writing. Parents are readily informed if a student is in danger of failing and strategies are put into place on a case-by-case basis to improve the situation.

Students are made to feel important and valued for their efforts. There is much recognition of successful achievement. Students are involved in their individual work but group work where students have opportunities for discussion and cooperation is not general practice throughout the school. Some teachers are more successful than others in adapting activities to take account of the ways students learn. Students express interest in opportunities to become involved in institutional decision-making but have few opportunities to do so at present as the focus of student input is confined to fundraising and school clubs.

The school manages the budget and other resources well to meet student needs and whole-school priorities. Student attendance is 91% which is above average for City wide schools. All student attendance is recorded electronically and late students are supervised with immediate contact to parents. Each student becomes known by one teacher and/or guidance counselor over the course of their time in the school. Students respond positively to this by remaining in school, gaining self-esteem and showing progress academically.

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.

Staff is stable with many staff and senior administrators having been at the school for long periods of time. This stability, as well as having benefits, makes change more difficult. For example, some staff members do not yet recognize the usefulness of data analysis, especially comparisons of data across classrooms.

All staff members are encouraged to reflect on their practices and respond critically. School leaders look at outcomes and in accountability reports and student records. One of the top priorities for the principal has been the maintenance of a safe and secure learning environment for students and he has initiated many strategies that ensure that appropriate

student behavior is demonstrated in this highly populated, multiple session school. All school leaders and teachers act in positive ways to support this goal.

Professional development occurs mainly in departments where teachers meet together on a monthly basis. There is rarely time for extended professional dialogue. The school profitably used the recent Election Day to focus on exploring in detail and consequence eight case studies of students achieving at different rates. Particular professional focus has been based around cooperative learning techniques to increase student progress. The school recognizes that additional opportunities for staff to meet across faculties would be advantageous in revising curricula and sharing good teaching practices, as well as comparisons of student progress and levels of performance.

The principal and assistant principals visit teachers in their classrooms, with follow-up discussion of their recommendations for improvement. These findings also contribute to the school's professional development plan. There is a program of inter-visitations involving some teachers to broaden their exposure to different teaching techniques. The principal has been very successful in supporting staff to improve the learning of underperforming students.

One of the strengths of the school is the number of options that students have to take part in a wide range of experiences. Apart from the exceptional range of courses and programs, there are 51 school clubs for student personal and social development. Many of the school's courses have associations with the City University of New York campuses in Queens. There is also a rich array of partnerships with law firms, dance companies, universities, clubs and many other community organizations. These partnerships work successfully with great benefit to students and the school.

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.

School goals are determined through the representative school leadership team, and progress is reviewed by the cabinet and the leadership team. Parent members of the school leadership team report regularly to the parent body. School goals are expressed in general terms only without interim goals or measurable targets being formally identified for each study or grade level, making it more difficult to evaluate progress towards each goal.

The principal is well aware of the advantages of the use of data. He analyzes student performance by grade level and subject area, but there is minimal comparison of these results between teachers themselves. All teachers have been given copies of their own students' results for their own review and considerations for improvement. Most teachers use this information to good effect to guide their instruction and modify their teaching.

The use of data informs decision-making on a day-to-day basis as teachers and counselors work with students to support them and improve their development both academically and personally. One of the school's biggest strengths is the way it has been able to re-orient itself to address the needs of all students because of changing enrolment.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Benjamin N. Cardozo High School (HS 415)	∅	✓	+
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: 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: 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: 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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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