



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Martin Van Buren High School

High School 435

**230 - 17 Hillside Avenue
Queens
NY 11427**

Principal: Marilyn Shevel

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Reviewer: Denis Pittman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Martin van Buren High School serves an ethnically diverse population in Queens educating 3,416 students from grades 9 to 12. Enrollment has increased significantly since the re-designation of some local schools.

The greatest proportion of students, at 55%, is Black. In addition 15% are Hispanic, 5% White and 25% are from Asian and other ethnic groups. Five percent of students are English language learners. The proportion of students who receive special education is 6%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding. Attendance rates, currently at around 83% are below those found in similar schools and slightly above those found throughout the City.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides vision and energy to sustain an improving culture in the school.
- There are effective management systems to ensure a safe, well ordered community.
- The school has significantly improved the achievement of lower achieving students.
- The school provides an effective and supportive program for students with special educational needs.
- The Academy for Responsible Citizenship provides a supportive yet challenging environment for disaffected students.
- There is an extensive range of enrichment programs which are valued by the students.
- The school has established positive working relationships with outside agencies for the benefit of students.
- The focus on improving literacy skills has enhanced student achievement.
- Most lessons are well managed.

What the school needs to improve

- Use assessment data more consistently to differentiate instructional programs.
- Find ways to ensure a sharper focus on learning outcomes in every lesson.
- Continue to work on strategies for raising attendance levels.
- Explore ways to engage parents more fully.
- Arrange professional development opportunities to develop leadership and evaluative skills amongst senior managers.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school copes well with a challenging set of circumstances. The dramatic increase in the number of students relocated to the school has put a significant strain on physical and human resources. The principal has successfully implemented systems and curricular changes which are creating a more orderly and productive learning environment. However, it is the consistency with which these plans and practices are implemented that will be crucial to the school's continuing development. Where there has been that coherence in planning, professional development and shared teaching objectives, there have been successful outcomes as in the literacy program for low level achieving students. Graduation levels for these students increased significantly. The challenge for the school is to sustain these improvements by developing leadership capacity, commitment of all staff and the sharing of best practices.

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 principal has a central role in identifying the direction that the school takes to improve student performance. She has a good understanding of the data the school gathers and is skilled in its interpretation. The overall progress of students over time is monitored carefully. The school has been particularly successful in enhancing the performance of low achieving students. For example 85% of students who are identified as 'level 1 readers' in grade 9 go on to graduate.

The principal regularly works with members of the cabinet and other teams of staff to lead reviews of student performance data. The analysis of data also includes the performance outcomes of specific classes and so gives a context to review teacher effectiveness. The data is analyzed to identify potential whole school issues. As a result, competence in literacy has emerged as a focus for improvement. While the school has an effective overview of performance disaggregated by gender and special education, the relative performance of ethnic and racial groups remains less carefully analyzed. The school appropriately benchmarks itself against similar schools in order to improve its performance. To this end the school has made inroads into improving its academic performance.

The generation of assessment data between subject areas and particularly within specific classes is not consistent. Some teachers are not providing a regular, broad enough assessment profile to ensure that progress is measured accurately. Where there is a wide range of assessment data it is used effectively. Timely intervention is arranged, addressing shortfalls in individual progress including in-school support from specialist staff. The school provides after-school support classes but student attendance is not always

consistent and, in consequence, the impact upon their progress and achievement is diminished.

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.

Student performance data is regularly scrutinized by subject faculties who discuss together the next steps required to help students progress further. The role of guidance staff in this process is not yet fully developed. For example the communication between subject and guidance staff needs to be more rigorous to ensure that there is a common basis to the advice which the student is receiving.

Relevant intervention strategies are arranged with specialist staff for those students who are struggling. Each subject area has detailed plans in place to promote goals for improving performance. However there is a lack of precision in some plans with regard to identifying timeframes and the specific accountabilities of teachers. The high expectations expressed in these documents are variably implemented.

Students are appreciative of the way the school helps them whatever their needs. However some parents feel that they are not sufficiently involved with the decisions about the progress of their child nor adequately informed about it. Appropriate systems are in place to promote parental involvement but these have not been adequately communicated to the parent body to ensure that parents have a clear idea as to how they can communicate with the school. The school is aware that it needs to do something about these perceptions in order to bring more parents on board to ensure that progress of students is a shared responsibility.

The school has effective measures for identifying students who are at risk. Specialist teachers are provided to monitor their progress. Students with special educational learning needs are well supported through a number of school based activities. Learning goals are carefully planned and monitored to ensure continuous progress, step by step. Additional intervention classes are provided by the school, including group work with specialist teaching. The Academy for Responsible Citizenship is an excellent innovation. It is very well led, providing a stimulating and enriching environment which promotes the achievement of students placed on the program.

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 aligned to the New York City and State standards and is based on the Triple A model (Adolescence Academic Achievement). This model provides direction for using the curriculum. It supports and directs opportunities for teachers to match students’ work to the achievement levels of each student. The overall quality of classroom instruction is proficient. Where there is an appropriate variety in the classroom activities

then students are actively engaged in the lesson and interested in their work. Most teachers do provide the right levels of challenge although this is not consistent throughout the school. Not all teachers give sufficient thought to the different achievement levels of students and how to modify their instructional programs to accommodate these differences. The more successful teachers use different teaching strategies such as the selective use of questions, arranging students to work in pairs or groups and provide activities to match the students' achievement levels. Teachers are accountable for the quality of instruction in their classrooms and their work is monitored by the subject leaders.

The principal, assistant principals and teachers have all undergone training in the Triple A program which directs modifications of the curriculum across subjects and through faculties. Data is obtained from this curriculum using test results, roll books, teacher observations and assessments from different subjects. This data is reviewed within faculties and used to set goals and targets. An example is the recognition that some 900 students are at the level 1 reading stage on entry. By targeting these students through a specialised literacy program and the Triple A curriculum, a significant proportion have graduated.

Data is effectively used by the principal to influence budgetary decisions. The students starting times have been modified to allow for a 'staggered' start to the day. This ensures a more effective use of the site, a strategy for ensuring a safe environment and making better use of resources to enhance the progress and performance of students.

Although the school's attendance rates are lower than averages for the City and similar schools, attendance procedures are understood by the students. All absences are routinely followed up and pursued. Reasons for absence are analysed and have been traced to the start times in the schedule and the problems some students have travelling from considerable distances. The school has set targets for 86% attendance rates this year. The personal needs of students are responded to by teachers and students have teachers they know and trust. The most vulnerable students are supported well through the Academy for Responsible Citizenship programme.

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 has clear criteria for the selection of staff. These are based upon an expectation of professional competence in the use of data to compare student performance and to ensure that students are sufficiently challenged. External factors have affected the composition of the staff roll because there has been a re-allocation of teachers to the school as a result of other school closures. The school has detailed development plans which focus appropriately around the aims and goals of the school. The willingness or capacity to revise teaching plans based on progress information is not a consistent feature of the school's work. Professional development requirements arise out of issues identified by the leadership team. The principal made an informed decision to provide training for all staff for the literacy program. This strategy provided a consistent approach to improving the reading and writing skills of low achieving students. The principal is active around the school and has a good appreciation of the overall quality of teaching. Teachers with leadership responsibilities are accountable for the monitoring of classroom instruction. The principal is respected for her drive and dedication to the interests of students. The school is effectively run and controlled. This management aspect is a major

focus for the leadership team to ensure the safety of their students. The issues identified in teaching reviews are shared with senior managers and these form the basis of corrective action. The leadership team is in need of a more consistent approach to their management of change strategies. The principal has identified this as an issue which has to be addressed through professional development. The support for the students who are at risk is effectively supplemented through positive working relationships with outside agencies.

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.

The school's Comprehensive Education Plan is constructed collaboratively and is a working document, directing the work of the school. Teachers are involved in the decision making process so that school planning is determined by the results of data analysis and staff's understanding of students' progress. Progress towards achieving its stated aims is regularly checked during the year. Most targets are successfully achieved. There is a systematic monitoring and revision of planning for all students. The basis of this revision comes from the use of interim assessments to evaluate student progress. Students are given unit tests to assess performance in their respective subjects. However there is limited standardisation of these tests across classrooms. In some classrooms grading rubrics are displayed to show what the expected levels are; however, this is not a consistent practice. In consequence some students have a clear understanding of how well they are progressing but others do not. The grading and checking of students work requires greater regularity to ensure that all students are making the progress required. Where this extensive formative data exists teachers are able to adapt their instruction programs more flexibly and focus on learning outcomes.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Martin Van Buren High School (HS 435)	∅	✓	+
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.	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	