



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Concord High School

High School 470

**109 Rhine Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10304**

Principal: Ronald J. Gorsky

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Reviewer: Linda Murgatroyd

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Concord High School is a transfer school serving 170 students in grades 10 through 12. Transfer schools in New York City work with students who are over-age and under-credited (16 - 21 years old, and at least one year behind in high school credits). While they are subject to modified forms of accountability, they are held accountable, like all high schools in New York, for bringing all students to graduation with a regular or Regents-level high school diploma.

The school enrolment comprises 34% Hispanic, 34% Black, and 32% White students, with approximately the same proportions of male and female students. Approximately 13% are special education students, and around 3% are English language learners. The school has a relatively low percentage of students newly arrived in the country compared with others in the neighborhood, and among these students the most common language is Spanish.

The principal and assistant principal have been in their positions since 2004.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principal provide highly effective leadership, and have created a school with a successful focus on students' academic and personal development.
- Students who have been less than successful in traditional high schools demonstrate remarkable progress in improved attendance, credits earned, Regents examinations passed and graduation from high school.
- Outstanding levels of care and attention to students motivate and engage them, building self-esteem and pride in their achievements.
- Very good relationships between staff, students and parents promote a school culture of high expectations, mutual respect, trust and safety.
- Attendance has a high priority and staff work extremely hard, in partnership with parents and caregivers, to get students into school every day.
- Goals and plans are set and shared with students and parents, so that they are clear about what they have to do to graduate.
- Staff support each other very well, and are strongly committed to ensuring that all students do as well as they can.
- A wide range of partnerships with community-based and higher education organizations adds significantly to students' academic progress and personal growth.
- An excellent data system is effectively used to demonstrate how well students do in their time in the school.
- The school building is welcoming, graffiti-free and well maintained, with attractive displays of students' work and school activities.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand teachers' gathering of detailed data on their students' progress, and ensure that its use to differentiate instruction becomes more widely established.
- Build on existing best instructional practices to make teaching more student-centered.
- Develop a consistent approach to feedback to students on their work, so that they are clear what they have to do to improve.
- Improve teachers' confidence and expertise in the use of technology as a classroom tool and for data handling.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

This is a school with enormous strengths. Aply led by the principal and assistant principal, all staff are committed to improving student achievement and building students' self-esteem. Staff have a deep understanding of the complex lives of students, but they do not let this get in the way of high expectations. The school is welcoming, purposeful, and caring, with an academic rigor that ensures that the majority of students graduate successfully in a short time. Parents and caregivers are appreciative of the way that staff see every student as an individual, and of the mutual respect and trust within the school. One parent described it as "the perfect school" for her daughter. Administrators are clear about the areas for development. Teachers do not yet all use a student-centered approach to actively involve students in lessons, and although they know their students well, do not all use the detail of data from assessments to give students work which is accurately matched to their levels. The principal and assistant principal provide strong, supportive leadership which has the capacity to take the school further in its mission to give these students a chance of academic recovery and a positive future.

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.

On entry to the school, a baseline is established for each student to show exactly the number of credits accumulated, how many Regents examinations have been taken and passed, and therefore what they need to graduate. Previous attendance is also recorded. This information is shared with students, teachers and parents to ensure that they know what they are aiming for.

Although all teachers keep records of their students' progress in their content areas, these vary in the level of detail. In English, where the specific skills are complex, portfolios of students' work are kept to show progress, with clear comments on how they might learn from a particular assignment, and time is allowed to act on the feedback. Not all other subjects show this level of detail of specific skills and understanding. In the best practice, teachers record the outcomes of tests and other assessments on a web-based system, which can easily be shared with students, parents and caregivers. This means that achievement is transparent, students are in control of their own progress, and that parents are kept informed on an assignment-by-assignment basis. As well as formal data, staff are very aware of every student's social circumstances, and take these into account when looking at how best to support and challenge each student. One student said, "They know your name...and everything else!"

Data is collated centrally in a very useful system maintained by the assistant principal, who uses it to demonstrate the good gains made by students in their time in the school, and thus what the school has added to their achievement. The information is also analyzed to show the comparative progress of individuals and the various groups in the school,

including special education students and English language learners. Although comparative information on the achievement of the different ethnic groups is looked at, at present it receives less emphasis than other categorizations.

There are strengths in the way the school seeks multiple ways to gather data on the effectiveness of its performance. As well as analyzing student progress, parents and students are surveyed and the results used to inform improvement planning. The school's performance year-on-year is monitored, and compared with that of other similar schools as well as traditional high schools. This information is routinely shared with teachers and guidance staff, so that they are aware of the school's progress against its priorities.

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.

The administration have very successfully established a school climate of support and collaboration, and as a result, all staff show high levels of commitment to the school's priorities of improving attendance, rapid credit accumulation and success in Regents examinations leading to graduation. Each student's plan for graduation is carefully mapped out, with clear information about the timescales in which credits can be gained and examinations taken. This information is regularly updated so that students, their parents and caregivers, and teachers are fully aware of what the goals are for each student. Teachers set goals for their departments, based on student performance data, with action plans to support improvements. These plans have measurable outcomes, but as yet do not have interim milestones, and are too new to have been through a cycle of review and revision.

Whole-school goals are set using student performance data. Because the school has accurate baseline data for logging students' prior achievement, and regularly measures progress from results in examinations and credits earned, the administration is able to predict graduation dates, and to set ambitious, measurable goals for each student. These individual goals are then aggregated to form whole-school goals. Staff follow up these goals with students, pushing hard where it is felt to be needed, so that students are well supported in meeting the goals set with them.

In addition to regular classes, all special education students are given an extra period a day of study skills, to help to equip them for working alongside their peers. They and the school's few English language learners are fully included in all classes, and teachers have had in-house training on how to incorporate strategies for supporting English language learners into lesson planning. Students from both groups make good progress. In some aspects, students get good feedback and are clear about what they have to do to graduate. However, the quality and detail of feedback to students on individual assignments varies from teacher to teacher. There is some excellent practice, in which students are given very specific guidance about how to improve their work, but this is not consistent across the school. Staff work closely with parents and caregivers, and use a web-based program or other means very effectively to keep parents informed about their children's progress and attendance and the support they need, so that many parents and caregivers are active partners in students' education. Effective support for parental involvement is given by the parent coordinator. Parents and caregivers, as well as other partners, are very supportive of the school and its aims.

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.

Scheduling and curriculum design are closely aligned in response to student data, in line with the school’s aims. The individual needs of each student are worked out, and then the overall program is built to meet the needs identified. In addition to the core tested subjects, the school has a good range of elective credit-bearing courses which draw on students’ interests in order to motivate and engage them. The use of technology is well integrated into some classes, with students being assigned laptops for research, note-taking and writing assignments. Interactive whiteboards are effectively used by some teachers to enliven their presentation, but this is an early stage for many teachers who have not yet explored the potential of this technology.

Teachers are held accountable for their students’ achievement through the scholarship reports, the analysis of performance data and administrators’ frequent visits to classrooms. All teachers effectively use their knowledge of students’ performance to challenge and support them. However, the use of assessment data to differentiate teaching in more detail is not yet established practice for most teachers, although there is some good practice on which to build. In some classes, teachers ensure that teaching is lively and relevant to their students’ lives, with a range of activities to vary the pace. Some instruction is too teacher-led and students are more passive learners in these classes.

The management of resources is closely tied to school priorities. As well as the investment in technology, the school is well resourced with classroom equipment and books. Scheduling and staffing are worked out carefully to meet students’ diverse needs and to provide as much opportunity as possible to accumulate credits. Staff are allocated classes which best use their strengths, and given opportunities to follow their own interests in electives as well as teach in their licensed subjects.

The school is characterized by positive relationships among, staff, students, and parents, generating high levels of mutual respect, care and trust. Staff work imaginatively to develop students’ belief in themselves and their capacity to succeed. These close, caring relationships are praised by students and their parents. They say that they are the main reason that students succeed at Concord, in contrast to their experience in traditional high schools. One student said, “This is a school for young people who know what they want for their lives.” Staff relentlessly pursue attendance with rigorous procedures, including patrolling the neighborhood during lunch break to remind students to return to school. Although attendance overall is lower than average for high schools, it represents for most students a significant improvement on that in their previous schools.

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 hiring is prioritized according to needs revealed by student and teacher data. A committee, which includes staff and students, carries out a thorough and rigorous process. As well as good subject knowledge and experience, the school looks for people who show

high expectations, and can work in a flexible way, offering a range of skills and interests, to build the variety of courses offered to students.

As well as carrying out formal observations as required, the principal and assistant principal constantly visit classrooms informally. They have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development of each teacher, and provide constructive feedback on their teaching. This information feeds into the professional development plan, which also addresses school priorities. Teachers have good opportunities to attend external courses which build their subject expertise, and coaches support teachers where necessary. Teachers support each other well, sharing strategies and learning from each other. A carefully planned schedule of inter-visitations has been drawn up to allow them to observe each others' teaching, and administrators are eager to see this process extended and developed further into an even more collaborative approach to develop a more consistent focus on learning and teaching. Administrators follow up professional development input through observations to judge its impact on teachers' practices.

Teachers meet in department teams, although these are small. A collaborative approach to decision-making, with staff involved in setting the school's agenda for improvement, ensures that all staff are firmly in support of the school's priorities. Members of Camelot, a community-based organization which provides violence intervention, peer-mediation and counseling for students, are full members of the staff team, and add significantly to students' experiences in school. Partnerships with other organizations, colleges and universities are very well used to support students' academic achievement. Attendance at colleges for tutoring helps to expand students' horizons and adds to their expectations for themselves. The principal works very closely with the assistant principal, and they are very well respected by staff, students and parents. They have effectively created a calm, purposeful school in which everyone has a deep commitment to the success of the young people it serves. Despite the obvious successes of the school, they are not complacent, and clearly have the capacity to lead the school through further improvements.

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.

Clear plans for students map out exactly what they have to do within each time period to graduate, and are regularly reviewed and revised if necessary. At a whole-school level, all staff are involved in establishing priorities for the Comprehensive Education Plan. These priorities are measurable, and are regularly reviewed against actual student achievement, and adjusted if necessary.

There are clear links between school priorities, the budget and professional development. Revision of plans leads into the next set of goals, so that there is continuity of development. Staff try new initiatives, and are willing to make changes if review indicates a need. For example, classes established for students with low attendance were evaluated, found not to be working well and the resources redirected to another initiative. There is a real sense of purpose among staff, students and parents.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Concord High School (HS 470)	∅	✓	+
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	