



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Leadership Institute

High School 276

**1701 Fulton Avenue
New York
NY 10457**

Principal: Ronald Gonzalez

Dates of review: March 8 - 9, 2007

Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well
What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation
How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Leadership Institute is a growing high school currently serving 206 students in grades 9 and 10. The school plans to add a grade each year until it reaches its full component of grades 9 through 12. The current location of the school is its second in as many years. The student population is 65.5% Hispanic, 28.6% Black with the remaining students representing White, Asian and other backgrounds. Special education and English language learners represent approximately 14.5% of the population, respectively. Males are 43.3% of the student body and females comprise 56.7%.

As an Empowerment School, The Leadership Institute has more flexibility to make key decisions and control resources, develop or purchase professional development services, choose affiliations and it benefits from reduced paperwork and reporting requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is respected by students and staff who recognize his work ethic and dedication to the school.
- The staff are supportive of one another and practice collaborative decision-making.
- Students feel supported, safe and well cared for by the school.
- The school tone is welcoming and friendly.
- The school is supported by a network of organizations representing higher education, as well as research-based, civic and faith-based constituencies.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase access to and the analysis, distribution and utilization of assessment data to understand and address the needs of students and of the school.
- Continue to refine structures and support systems for English language learners, special education students and those identified for academic intervention services.
- Institute the use of periodic assessments to provide teachers with regular diagnostic information about students' discrete learning needs.
- Provide teachers with training in techniques for the differentiation of instruction in the classroom in order to meet the specific identified learning needs of all students.
- Develop a standards based curricula that incorporate regularly administered common assessments in the core tested disciplines.
- Use the development of the 2007-2008 Comprehensive Education Plan as an opportunity to involve a broad range of stakeholders in diagnosing the needs of the school.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school.

The principal, who accepted the challenge to lead the development of the Leadership Institute as conceived by its community based partner, has worked tirelessly to provide the best possible educational program for his students despite numerous structural and technological barriers. These have included relocation, facilities that do not adequately support the instructional program, lack of access to Department of Education databases, insufficient staff understanding of how to manipulate the databases, the necessity to recreate incorrectly coded data from 2005-2006, high staff turnover and the enrollment of students with identified needs that the school is not fully able to meet.

The school is just beginning to access the available data to understand its needs and those of its students and has yet to identify a periodic assessment product for use in the school. The practice of planning and setting goals that incorporate measurable short and long term targets is only now emerging in the school. Teachers, many of whom are new to the profession, are learning how to engage students in their studies while also supporting their emotional and social needs. Students recognize the concern that teachers and administrators have for them and many view the school as a safe haven. The school's self evaluation reflects a clear understanding of its current status and what it needs 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 undeveloped.

Recently, the school has begun to access the available data to gain an understanding of its students' attendance and academic progress. This data, and other information such as class profiles created by guidance personnel, is currently held at the administrative level. The administration plans to disseminate relevant information to staff once the data has been disaggregated and simplified. Teachers, through instruction and classroom assessment, track students' academic growth. Mathematics and English teachers administer a diagnostic test to assist in placement upon entry. The school does not utilize any regularly administered periodic assessment. Administration reviews report cards to monitor grading practices at the grade level and by academic subject. As the school has completed just one full year of operation, comparison of its progress over time is limited as is identification of and comparison with 'similar' schools. The school has begun to use scholarship information and emerging Regents scores to understand its progress but, to date, the quantity of this data is insufficient to indicate solid trends.

While the school is in possession of data identifying its proportion of ethnic groups, little has been done to track and analyze their relative progress. Similarly, the school is aware of its disproportionately large number of girls but the effect of this phenomenon has not been interrogated. This year, the school has identified its English language learners and

its special education students. There is little evidence to suggest a deep understanding of their performance or progress.

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 undeveloped.

The school’s practice with respect to planning has, for the most part, been reactive rather than proactive. For instance, when attendance was discovered to be problematic in the school, an outside agent who provides attendance support to the school on a part time basis was asked to draw up an attendance plan. As the plan has not been implemented, its impact remains unknown. Similarly, the ‘Rudimentary Plan for Addressing Student Failure’ was created by the academic intervention services coordinator in response to the overwhelming number of students that teachers identified for academic interventions. Since this was only put into operation in March 2007, the effects of this plan are also unknown. When the school recognized the need to codify practices regarding issues such as discipline, student dress and grading, they used Election Day professional development time to create policies. The enforcement of these policies is, to date, somewhat uneven.

For students needing extra help, tutoring takes place during the extended day. Saturday school assists with Regents preparation, ‘College Now’ assists with credit recovery and teachers regularly reach out to assist students during their lunch period and after school. The school is not sufficiently well staffed to deliver required services for its special education population and it contracts with outside providers to assist these students. One of two planned special education positions was not filled this year. Similarly, the school does not have staff licensed to teach English language learners. They are being instructed by English teachers who have begun to receive support from network personnel with expertise in instructing this population. Daily ‘advisory’ class periods provide all students with an avenue for social and emotional, as well as academic support. The school’s Empowerment School Intensive team is in the beginning stages of determining what population they want to study and what data they need to access to accomplish their goals. Periodic assessments are not yet utilized in the school.

The school communicates student progress to parents through report cards. Parents have begun to be offered informative programs by the recently hired parent coordinator although their involvement in the school is very minimal. Teachers’ expectations for students have been raised as a result of the institution of a uniform grading policy. As the school grows towards graduating its first cohort in June 2009, greater emphasis on high achievement for college and career planning among students is emerging.

While the school does have a Comprehensive Education Plan, its goals and plans for improving student achievement are unknown to staff or students and do not therefore drive the activity of the school community in any identifiable way.

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 undeveloped.

The school’s curriculum is gradually evolving as the school grows. Mathematics teachers have collaborated on a sequence of instruction to prepare students for the Regents examinations. A science teacher mapped topical coverage leading to the living environments examination; social studies teachers received suggested course outlines from the assistant principal. English teachers are creating their curriculum with the assistance of a coach/mentor hired in December 2006. The school’s curriculum is not expressed in a common format and does not utilize regular common assessments of student progress across each discipline. The school’s instructional program is unique in that it incorporates, with the assistance from its community action projects specialist, the themes of leadership, community action and social justice which underpin the school’s mission. Students feel very well cared for and known by the school and its teachers and are keenly aware of these themes.

Administrators hold teachers accountable for improving student progress and their instructional practice through routine visits to classrooms, lesson observation, and reviews of report cards and student work. Unsatisfactory teachers have been removed. A recently hired coach is providing assistance to teachers new to the profession and they are progressing in their skill acquisition. However, lessons are not sufficiently differentiated and vary with respect to their capacity to actively engage students. Teachers do not have data, beyond that generated through their own practice, informing them of students’ diagnosed learning needs that might inform their lesson planning.

The school’s budget, staffing and scheduling decisions are driven by the dramatic annual increases in the number of incoming students as the school adds a grade year-on-year. Staff and materials expenditures increase based on the courses added and the identified needs of the school and its population. For example, an assistant principal, knowledgeable about curriculum, scheduling and data retrieval was hired in the school’s second year. The school added a special education position and contracted for additional services to meet the needs of special education students. The school’s daily schedule was shifted to an earlier start and ending time so that students receiving extended-day services would not have to travel after nightfall. This shift resulted in the unintended consequence of increasing tardiness, which has become the focus of a school-wide study organized by a mathematics teacher.

Attendance, currently below 80%, is a challenge for the school. In addition to routine home contacts, and written attendance guidelines, the school has just created an attendance plan to bring greater structure to attendance reporting and follow through.

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 school hires by committee and has well developed criteria for interviews and selection decisions. These include identifying the candidate’s expectations for student performance and determining their methods for understanding student progress. The hiring criteria for

the assistant principal included the capacity to use data to compare outcomes across classrooms and within the school.

Teachers new to the school are supported by a recently hired coach and by their co-workers. They have common planning time with teachers of the same discipline, allowing for collaboration across grade levels. The schedule does not accommodate common grade level planning time. A mentoring plan addresses needs with respect to classroom management and potential structures for intervisitation data gathering. Professional development within the school has been limited during the current school year as organizational issues have taken precedence. While teachers are supported in taking workshops and courses outside the school, the need for targeted professional development in data analysis and differentiated instruction is well understood by teachers and administrators.

The principal is well liked and respected by staff and students who understand the demands of growing a new school. He visits classes frequently and provides feedback on a checklist covering topics such as organization, environment, and instruction. His leadership style is collaborative and democratic and most decisions are made after whole group consultation resulting in a school that runs smoothly.

The school has strong relationships with youth development and support services such as the Northwest Bronx Community Clergy Coalition that provides leadership development training and opportunities for student tutoring and mentoring. The 'Sistahs and Brothas United' organization, a significant force in the creation of the school, provides community organization training, job placement opportunities, educational workshops, and mentoring. Lehman College provides opportunities for credit recovery. All of these organizations contribute to the school's academic and civic goals.

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 undeveloped.

The Comprehensive Education Plan, while including most of the required components including annual goals for improving student achievement, is not known to teachers and has not been a driving force in school improvement. Plans created in reaction to identified issues such as those for attendance and student failure, are recent and not yet operational. None of these plans include short term goals, timelines, and incremental measures of progress or the identification of responsible parties.

Comparisons of student progress within classrooms are made by teachers as an outgrowth of instruction and testing but comparisons across classrooms are less uncommon. Results of these comparisons, if undertaken, are not used to make interim diagnostic assessments nor are they related to the progress of plans and interventions. The school is not currently able to address all of the needs specified in students' individual education plans and the progress of English language learners has not been monitored as stipulated by statute. The school does not yet employ a regularly administered periodic assessment to increase diagnostic measures of students' academic needs and progress.

The school recognizes its shortcomings with respect to the use of data and the need to plan proactively and deliberately. In early February 2007, 'School Improvement Initiative'

addressing governance, data gathering, creation and implementation of an action plan, and the development of an operational Comprehensive Education Plan was set forth with the intention of substantially improving the school's ability to support and improve student achievement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Leadership Institute (HS 276)	∅	✓	+
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		