



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**High School for Violin and Dance**

**High School 543**

**1110 Boston Road  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Tanya Lippold**

**Dates of review: February 26 - 27, 2007**

**Reviewer: Bruce Berry**

## 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 High School for Violin and Dance is an Empowerment School with 215 students in grade 9 to grade 12. The school opened five years ago and has built up student numbers over that period. Empowerment Schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment Schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

The ethnic breakdown of students is 64% Hispanic, 35% Black and 1% from other ethnic groups. There are 11% English language learners and 16% special education students.

The school is Title I eligible with the 88.4% of students qualifying, which is higher than that for similar schools and City schools. The attendance figure in 2005 was 83.2%, above that for similar schools and City schools. The attendance figure is lower for this academic year and is 79.5% to date.

The principal has been in post for three years. The school has had a high turnover of staff over the past two years and at present there are seven teachers in their first year and four teachers in their second year at the school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has the respect and support of all sections of the school community and has the capacity to effect change.
- The leadership team has successfully begun the process of change to improve achievement.
- The school has effective practices for meeting the individual needs of English language learners and special education students.
- The school has successfully increased the number of students achieving graduation.
- The school is a well ordered and respectful community.
- Parents and students are extremely supportive of the work of the school and very enthusiastic about the positive changes over the past three years.
- Teachers work well in teams and are fully committed to improving achievement for all students.
- The particular focus on violin, dance and creative arts adds enrichment to the experiences gained by the students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Build on the practices developed to improve graduation rates and establish similar practices at all grade levels.
- Strengthen assessment and goal-setting practices in all curriculum areas and at all grade levels, particularly between marking periods.
- Further develop instruction practices to engage students and provide pace and challenge consistently in all lessons.
- Ensure that differentiation practices are targeted to provide challenge for all groups of students in the school, paying special attention to gifted and talented students.
- Further develop periodic benchmark practices to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of assessment outcomes and goal setting at all levels across the school.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The principal's high quality strategic vision, leadership, management and passion for students to succeed are major factors in creating a caring and work-centered culture, which is contributing to raising achievement in the school. As an Empowerment School, it is effectively using periodic assessment and goal-setting practices to generate data to improve student achievement. Staff also analyze and review external data. The school has achieved good graduation rates and improvement in all subjects over the past year. The school recognizes that its next step is to consolidate and strengthen practices to bring about further improvement in the future.

The school is held in high regard by the parents and students who are pleased with the changes over the past three years and see the school as a caring family environment. The focus of the school on violin and dance provides experiences and opportunities for the students beyond those they would normally encounter. All students study violin and dance for all or part of their school career. The program offers the opportunity to take part in school concerts or perform to a wider audience outside school, thus building the confidence and self esteem of the students. The principal has a clear vision of the future strategic activities needed to continue the school's improvement.

### 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 school generates its own data and tracks individual student's credit accumulation towards graduation. Progress is monitored using interim data and reviewed at the end of each marking period at individual student, grade, subject and leadership levels. The external data available shows a marked improvement across all subject areas from 2006 to 2007.

Progress is monitored across ethnic groups as part of regular assessment processes. English language learners have supported in their integration into general education. The effectiveness of this support is demonstrated by all grade 11 English language learners scoring above 55 in the Regents English examination in 2006. Special education students are also well supported in the school. Individual education plans are monitored regularly by two specialist teachers who work with all the teachers in the school to ensure assessments, goals and progress are in line with the goals in the individual education plans.

While most groups in the school have challenging goals for each marking period, there is not a clear procedure for creating challenge and educational acceleration for the gifted and talented students who form a small minority of the school population.

The school has one year's data with respect to graduation rates, and achieved 58.2% graduation in 2006. All subjects have improved results from 2006 to the early results in 2007 and the school has already exceeded the annual measurable objective in mathematics for 2007 and is on course to at least achieve the annual measurable objective in English language arts within this academic year. The school also compares its performance with similar schools.

**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.**

The Comprehensive Education Plan has clearly defined and appropriate whole school plans and goals for improvement. Grade level and subject teams meet regularly to monitor progress, plan interventions and curriculum alignment. At the end of each marking period the leadership and staff teams assess progress towards goals with respect to the school's assessment outcomes, graduation credits achieved and external test results. At classroom level, there is not a consistent system for creating short-term benchmark goals between marking periods in order to create a series of smaller step, achievable and challenging goals for each student.

Goals center on individual student achievement, improving graduation rates and improving students' results in external tests in all subjects. The school tracks each student's credit accumulation, identifies areas for improvement and students at risk. Subject staff analyze external data and research student responses to questions on the tests to identify curriculum strands in need of improvement for individual and groups of students, who then receive intervention to consolidate those skills.

For students at risk, programs of study are arranged and the identified group's progress is monitored by designated teachers. Strengths and weaknesses analysis takes place with respect to non-completed units and intervention strategies are agreed and applied. This strategy was effective in raising graduation rates and subject test scores.

Teachers have high expectation of the students, which is supported by parents and students. Report cards are sent to parents at the end of each marking period and the parents are invited into school to discuss their child's progress. Parents also have the opportunity to discuss progress at any time during the year.

Leadership, grade and subject teams and classroom teachers are driven by the school improvement agenda. They use data and goals to assess progress, which leads to curriculum realignment and determines intervention strategies.

**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 school maps the curriculum each year based upon the outcomes of test results, graduation credits gained and curriculum needs identified by the interrogation of school data. Grade and subject teams plan curriculum goals and activities, and individual teachers plan lessons based upon the class goals for that year. The cycle of review and alignment is built around the marking periods, with grade and subject teams refining curriculum activities based on data outcomes.

Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes and are monitored through formal and informal lesson observations undertaken by the principal, as well as by the analysis of data generated for the students in their class. In grade 9, on entry to the school, initial assessments are undertaken and an intensive curriculum program is designed to address the identified needs of the students. Differentiation practices do not provide enough challenge for all groups of students in the school, in particular for the small number of gifted and talented students.

The school is an Empowerment School. It has made use of assessment materials developed by teachers and coaches and aligned to State standards. Similarly, budget, staffing and scheduling decisions are driven by the use of data generated by school assessment, Princeton results and State tests. This is now producing improved test scores in the Regents examinations.

Most students are engaged by the instruction practices and programs in the school. In some lessons, however, some students are not fully engaged by instruction. In those instances, instruction practices are not sufficiently planned to provide pace, challenge and interest for students to keep students interested and eager to learn.

The school is a well ordered and respectful community. The leadership and teachers know and care for students academically and socially. Students are extremely supportive of the work of the school and are very enthusiastic about the positive changes over the past three years. Students know they can approach any member of staff about any issue and that they will receive support. There are robust procedures for addressing student absences. First day calling, follow-ups with parents, letters home, home visits and in-school parent conferences are all strategies used to improve attendance. In spite of this, attendance has fallen to 79.5% for this year, but the absence rate includes 7% of all students who cannot be traced, but still remain on the school register.

**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 selection process for new teachers is robust and includes applicants teaching a model lesson and an interview. The interview is conducted by a team of staff and explores knowledge of instruction, goal setting, assessment and student welfare. Professional development focuses on instruction and curriculum requirements to raise achievement levels of students, particularly in tests and in graduation levels. Team leaders at each grade level work with staff on data analysis and on the identification of the needs of staff in broadening their knowledge and experience. Part-time curriculum-based coaches work with staff on areas of development identified from a variety of data outputs. The school has partnership links with the Teachers' College and the National Academy for Excellent Teaching, which provide professional development support for staff.

The principal observes lessons formally and informally. The principal and staff have an agreed observation form which outlines the key components expected in good instruction practice. Follow up meetings or written feedback is given to the teacher on strengths and areas for improvement which are considered to be constructive.

The school has established a number of useful forums for evaluating the implementation of plans and goals. The administration meets regularly with team leaders to review progress towards whole school and grade level goals and outcomes of internal assessment, external grades and graduation credit accumulation. Grade level teams meet for one hour on four days each week to discuss the impact of the review of outcomes on curriculum and instruction delivery. Subject teams meet one day each week and follow a similar agenda. As a result, students at risk are placed on intervention programs to address the identified issues. The principal has the respect of teachers, students and staff and has galvanized all sections of the school community to focus on raising achievement. She has established an orderly learning community, successfully achieved school improvement since taking up her position and has the capacity to effect change in the future.

Students are fully supported academically and emotionally by the staff and have the benefit of two school guidance counselors to call on. They also have partnerships with Monroe College, Jump Start which provides a Saturday program for grades 11 and 12 with college credits being earned upon completion. Other partnerships exist with Hostos College and Directions for our Youth which both provide various age groups with a taste of college life.

**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 Comprehensive Education Plan has clearly defined plans and achievable, yet challenging, goals to improve achievement at all levels and appropriate time scales attached. All subject teams and grade teams participate in and have ownership of the plan. The goals are linked to periodic assessment data outcomes and action plans

support the development activities within each strand of the plan. The impact can be seen by the graduation rate and the improved Regents test results from 2006 to early 2007.

The school monitors assessment and progress towards goals at the end of each marking period. The school tracks progress of individuals, groups and grades and plans interventions and curriculum realignment base on the outcomes. Interim goals and plans are reviewed at the end of each marking period and are adjusted in line with the outcome data. An example of the analysis carried out is the breakdown of answers to state exams into curriculum strand information to identify strengths and weaknesses of individual and groups of students. The cycle of assessment, goal setting and review drives the agenda for raising achievement in the school. However, periodic benchmark practices are not yet sufficiently well developed to maximize the monitoring and evaluation of assessment outcomes and goal setting at all levels across the school.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: High School for Violin and Dance (HS 543)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	