



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

High School of World Cultures

Public School 550

**1300 Boynton Avenue
Bronx
NY, 10472**

Principal: Dr Ramon Namnum

Dates of review: November 1 - 2, 2006

Reviewer: Margaret Lee

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

This is a unique high school offering intensive English and high school education to immigrant students who have been in the United States for up to one year. The students begin at grade 9 and progress through the school either for four years, or until they are 21 years of age. Ninety percent of the 398 students are from Hispanic families. All students are English language learners (100%). Many students travel long distances to the school. Ninety four percent of the student body is Title 1 eligible.

The school English Language Arts (ELA) performance index has been gradually increasing since 2003 by approximately 10 points each year, until 2005 when the school reached an English Language arts (ELA) performance index of 99 points. Many students graduate with a high school diploma or complete a general education certificate. The students are supported in their work with staff by two guidance counselors.

The school is housed on part of the fourth and fifth floor of a building which also accommodates three other schools. Because it is at 122% capacity, the school is forced to operate a staggered organizational timetable.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a committed leader who effectively guides staff in the use of data.
- The school works hard to ensure that all students gain the highest possible qualifications in the high school examinations that are conducted in English.
- The school administration uses student data well to select the programs that are most relevant to each student's needs.
- The school uses students' baseline data well at the beginning of each year.
- Good use is made of regular reviews of student progress using both commercial and teacher based assessments.
- Students are constantly challenged by individual programs of learning that are reviewed and changed regularly.
- School administrators act as very effective personal mentors providing pertinent on-going support to individual students.
- Staff are given a wide range of professional development opportunities which bring exciting new ideas into the school.
- Thoughtful lesson scheduling ensures that students remain focused and work well.

What the school needs to improve

- Enable teachers to have better opportunities to develop and share effective English as a second language teaching strategies, especially in mathematics.
- Increase parental involvement in school activities.
- Involve students more in the review of their own progress during the year.
- Continue to seek ways to improve the attendance of students.
- Increase opportunities for collaboration between teachers.
- Make sure that learning objectives are clearly stated and shared with students so that the purpose of their learning is clear.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Since the principal's appointment four years ago the school has been transformed into one that serves and empowers the needs of its unique student population. The school provides good guidance and support to ensure that all students are able to graduate from high school and develop a command of both the English language and also to further develop their skills in their first language.

The school is organized to enable students to move forward progressively as they achieve English fluency. This enables some students to move into higher academic streams and learn at a faster rate. Formalized reviews of student data occurs every six months. The cycle of school-based interim assessments is mapped out for the year and is widely published ensuring that all staff are aware of the school's expectations of every student. The school English Language Arts (ELA) performance index results have been steadily rising from 61 in 2003 to 99 in 2005.

The school building previously accommodated 4,000 students in one school and now houses five smaller schools. The school building has a sophisticated fully functioning theater and an internal heated swimming pool for use by each of the schools.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

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

The school uses the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test to guide the formation of classroom groups and to inform instructional programs for all students. Students then follow a carefully designed individualized program of study, formulated by staff and reviewed by the members of the cabinet. For students in their graduation year detailed individual intervention plans are developed. Teachers follow an internal assessment policy and all teachers maintain grade books for recording assessments on student homework, student classroom work, participation in class and test results. Teachers have some limited common preparation time and use this to discuss student progress.

Technology is used very effectively to support these data collection procedures. A software program provides itemized analysis of teacher based assessments. Teachers design the multi-choice test and transfer it on electronic card for scanning and collation of item analysis for each student. There is a very useful centralized data base for each student containing all information and test results. This carries longitudinal data of student progress, test results and attendance information. Student progress is accounted for well through the use of these practices.

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 school has high expectations of its students and works hard to maintain its aim that students are the first priority in any decision making. Students and parents are delighted with this approach and when asked students said that they felt “valued by the school as important citizens of a well ordered community”. The school uses data effectively to devise detailed plans and to set challenging goals for all its students. It reviews these plans and goals regularly to make sure that work is matched to the needs of each individual, particularly those who have the greatest need.

Staff meet together whenever they can to discuss the progress made by students against the goals that are set but the school is aware that more needs to be done to allow teachers to work collaboratively and to discuss the progress of individual students in different study areas.

The school has thought critically about its scheduling and has appropriately taken the step to institute two separate beginnings to the school day to enable increased use of facilities and wherever possible reduced class sizes.

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 has a very specialized curriculum that is carefully aligned to the particular needs of its students. Teachers are totally committed to the academic and personal welfare of their students and closely follow the school policy for recording student progress in the various curriculum areas. The school is aware of the need for all teachers to be further trained in the teaching and learning strategies of teaching English as a second language. The literacy teaching staff integrate these techniques into their teaching well and their classrooms contain interesting displays of good work that has resulted from this process. These teaching strategies are generally used helpfully in other subjects, including mathematics and science, but more could be done to develop a better range of intervention strategies in these areas. The use of assessment to inform the teaching programs for the majority of students is well developed; but more needs to be done to fully meet the needs of higher achieving students and the fluent English learner.

The students are calm and work diligently and are very appreciative of the friendship, care and concern shown by the teachers, academic coaches and members of the school administration. All these people work together as a team to support and guide the students. The school takes care to analyze the results for each student and then determines the most appropriate academic intervention. In their planning, many teachers identify the learning aims but these are not always referred to specifically in lessons and shared with students so that they can see the purpose behind their learning.

The school works hard to monitor attendance and punctuality, but despite its best efforts attendance is still below the City average at 81%.

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, who is respected by the school community, has been proactive in establishing the school with exemplary practices and with a staffing profile that works to attain high standards. His involvement in the Principal Leadership Academy and attendance at Harvard Principals Center during the summer has been instrumental in establishing continued development for the school, especially given its unique nature. He is relentless in his search for exemplars and has visited similar schools as far away as Mexico.

Staff are appointed according to the specific needs of the students as identified by the analysis of assessment data and. Clear expectations are outlined to all staff and are maintained rigorously by senior staff. The principal conducts learning walks, sometimes with the assistance of regional personnel, to continue the development of the teaching and learning programs. Teachers are also regularly observed for longer periods by the principal, both informally and formally.

External consultants are used to help classroom teachers to further develop their teaching. This is critical this year as the mathematics program is currently not consistently resulting in high levels of student success, with fewer students achieving the required standard than in the previous year.

A number of value added enrichment activities for students assist to consolidate the language development and have already occurred such as field trips to Washington, D.C. and local museums in New York City. Staff has been given the opportunity to visit Bronx International High school. The school budget is used effectively to purchase equipment to support the priority areas identified by the analysis of student data.

The school does not currently have a parent coordinator and parental involvement in the school is minimal. However, the school generally runs smoothly. There are plans to conduct workshops for parents in English language learning.

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 increased use of diagnostic and teacher classroom based assessments is providing teachers with valuable information for discussions at meetings that are held throughout the year to discuss the progress of students, particularly those that are particularly at risk of failing to meet the required grade. However, the school is still at a relatively early stage in the way in which it compares the performance of students in different classes.

The collection and analysis of data is developed within the classroom through the maintenance of student portfolios but the review of this information to inform teaching practice and modifications to school goals is not always done with sufficient frequency.

The school is now seeking ways to provide increased opportunities for students to be more involved with both self review and peer evaluations.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: High School of World Cultures (HS 550)	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
Section 1.01 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: 1 each student, classroom, grade level,			X
Section 1.02 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: 2 Ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*			X
Section 1.03 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: 3 all other categories of interest to the school*			X
Section 1.04 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 knows and respect students and responds 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 are characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	