



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Clinton School for Writers and Artists**

**Middle School 260**

**320 West 21st Street  
New York  
NY 10011**

**Principal: Jeanne-Marie Fraino**

**Dates of review: April 17 - 18, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Richard Woolf**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Clinton School for Writers and Artists is a middle school with 243 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 16% Black, 23% Hispanic, 49% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 5% special education students. Boys account for 37% of the students enrolled and girls account for 63%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 95.1%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school occupies the top portion of a five-floor building. An elementary school occupies the other four floors. The schools share an auditorium, although there are separate gymnasiums for each school on the top floor. The provision of space is a major concern for the middle school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal provides the school with good leadership based on a clear vision for students' academic and social development.
- Staff members embrace the principal's new initiatives and support her in the drive to meet student needs effectively.
- Teachers now have a better understanding of the benefits of data to inform their teaching.
- The needs of gender and ethnic groups are well served by the school to improve their learning.
- There is a strong home-school partnership aiming specifically at raising student expectations.
- The school provides its students with a exceptional arts program, aiming to broaden and challenge their horizons
- The students are well behaved, motivated and respectful of each other and their teachers.
- The school has a very good and supportive program to develop all teachers, but particularly those new to the profession.
- A proactive guidance program provides students with academic, emotional and social support in meeting their learning goals.

### What the school needs to improve

- Provide consistent support for students to address identified differences in their rates of progress, particularly for higher achieving students.
- Extend the development of teachers' use of differentiation strategies, with the emphasis on using data more effectively.
- Ensure that whole school goals are measurable, time-framed and have built-in benchmarks.
- Set more rigorous, challenging and measurable teacher goals.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to meet in grade teams and plan collaboratively to support student learning.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

### **Overall Evaluation**

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

The school is making good progress under the leadership of a new principal. Many new initiatives are in place. The staff and parents all feel these are positive and will ultimately improve the academic opportunities of the students. The school's arts curriculum is a strength and many students graduate to specialized high schools as a result of the instruction they receive in these areas.

With improving use, teachers have a better understanding of how data is able to inform their instruction. The school rigorously monitors the progress of special education students. Gender and ethnic groups benefit from the principal's recent work to identify their specific needs. The results are encouraging improvements in student learning. The developing home-school partnership is proving most successful, with parents and staff focusing their collective efforts on improving the students' educational opportunities. New teachers have a great deal of support from a hard-working staff. Students display high levels of motivation, particularly in the arts, and their behavior is very good. Supporting them achieve this is a proactive guidance department, catering for their academic, emotional and social needs. The school provides most students with a very good academic experience. However, it does not challenge all students to reach their academic potential in all areas of learning. Additionally, the school does not yet set its teachers really challenging targets based on student outcomes. Neither are overall school goals sufficiently rigorous to raise academic levels.

Since the last Quality Review, the school is making progress in a number of areas. These are most notable in data analysis, improving reading to allow for better access to the curriculum, and an understanding of students who may be at risk. The inquiry team meets regularly and has a very good knowledge of its "at risk" group. Their findings are allowing for a more proactive approach to these students' learning needs.

### **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 the student's progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Since the arrival of a new principal, the school's ability to use data is improving all the time. Teachers now have a better understanding of its relevance to drive instruction.

The school uses a range of data, such as State standardized tests and Acuity, and has an increasing and more productive array of in-house data. The principal uses the data to demonstrate progress across grade levels, and for individual students and teachers. This is an area previously lacking, and the positive impact this has on instruction is apparent to all teachers.

An aspect of the school's better use of data relates to special education students. There is now a clearer understanding of their specific needs with a focus more on individualized learning. The school has a comprehensive idea of the performance of its gender and ethnic groups. In the close analysis of such data, the school is undertaking very effective measures to ensure the students fully benefit from their educational experience. Similarly, the school uses all data sources to compare itself with similar schools. It uses the comparisons to challenge and improve on its own practice. Previously, the school undertook little or no data tracking to understand its progress against previous performance. The new principal's reversal of this trend is proving a valuable tool when discussing data with teachers, as she endeavors to raise the academic profile of the school. Teachers are receiving adequate training in the use of technology as it relates to data. This is a developing and successful part of the school's work.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Members of the senior leadership team, which includes parents, develop the overall goals for the year. The school does not set a numerical percentage increase in either student or teacher targets to demonstrate progress. The priority is for each student to make progress according to his or her own ability, with the caveat of there being a minimum progress of one year. The school does not yet focus on groups of special interest and target them with the rigor they do other aspects of their work. This is particularly the case of the higher-achieving students in grade 8, whose results take a dip at this grade level when comparing them to the achievements of their previous two years.

The principal holds a series of regular meetings where she shares overall school goals. Initially a cause for concern, the principal's ability to reach out to parents and the wider community is now proving successful in conveying the school's high expectations. Parents acknowledge they are receiving more information than in previous years and understand how the school seeks to improve the educational opportunities of their children. They have the means to contact the school through e-mail, and the new website keeps them abreast of up-to-date issues. One parent said, "What the school now says goes, where in the past this may not have been the case. Standards are now much higher with more challenge for our youngsters." The parent body is very articulate and demanding, particularly in relation to the delivery of the arts program. They offer information to the school that relates to their children's performance. They feel the home-school partnership is a growing and a pleasing strength of the school.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

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

The school makes very careful adaptations to the mandated curriculum. These include using a wide variety of sources to service the math curriculum and the undertaking of a number of cross-curricular projects. The project-based aspect of the work is one the students particularly enjoy and benefit from. They work well in groups and data shows this is improving their learning. The school places a great deal of emphasis on the improvement of reading skills as a means to better access the curriculum. Each student is aware of his or her reading levels. A number of different programs are in place to assist them to acquire these skills and the early indications are very positive.

Students benefit from an exceptional arts program that befits the name of the school. In grades 6 and 7 all students experience a range of programs that broaden their horizons in terms of fine and visual arts, as well as the performing arts. Included in this is a very good creative-writing program. In grade 8, students elect to specialize in one specific area. This is in order for them to prepare for auditioning at one of the City's specialized high schools. The number of students obtaining enrollment at such schools is increasing. Over the past few months, the school is holding its teachers more accountable for providing the students with interesting, engaging lessons in a safe and secure environment. The delivery of differentiated instruction is apparent in some lessons. However, there is a lack of consistency across the entire school, despite input from a number of external consultants.

The principal is an effective resource manager. She wisely allocates finances to support both teacher and student learning. Employing extra staff to provide additional support in the area of academic intervention is most profitable in improving outcomes for the at-risk students. One of the school's greatest assets is its size. Staff and students know each other as individuals and this is very helpful in establishing good relationships. At every opportunity, the principal models for both staff and students the high expectations she demands. The school achieves high levels of attendance. This is ascribable to parent expectation and the school's ability to provide an engaging curriculum, especially in the field of the arts.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal undertakes a number of informal and formal observations. Teachers appreciate this and welcome feedback to develop their instructional skills. The outcomes of these observations inform professional development programs for the needs of individual teachers and whole-school developments. A good example is the development of a whole-school reading program. The better use of data binders to inform instruction is another area where improvement has been encouraged through whole-school professional development. A number of external consultants also work with teachers in the fields of academic intervention and math. The school has a cycle of meetings for teachers to share information and teaching strategies. However, the school

does not yet have staff meeting in grade level teams. Intervisitation is not a strong feature of the school, but it does occur within subject teams.

The school has an effective system in place to support new teachers. It provides positive assistance ensuring new teachers are aware of their responsibilities to challenge students to improve their learning. Teachers recognize this as being beneficial and that the support is on-going into their second and subsequent years. Students have responsibilities through an effective student government. They regular meet with the principal to air issues and concerns. The school guidance department is very active in providing students with emotional and social support in meeting their academic goals. The department is also responsible for the writing and delivery of the advisory program in which all students participate. Systems are in place that ensure incidents of poor behavior are minimal. A big incentive stems from students being able to leave the premises at recess and venture into the local neighborhood. They see this as a privilege and it ensures behavior in school is always good, so as not to have the privilege rescinded. The school has very good links with a number of external partners. These mainly come from the arts world and include a “parents as partners” scheme, which encourages parents and their children to work together on a number of arts projects. The school has a group of students traveling to Sardinia for an intensive arts course during the summer through one of its partners.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The school monitors and revises it work on five occasions during the year. The primary focus is to check on the progress of at-risk students. Results from such exercises prompt whether classes receive additional resources in terms of teacher time. The principal also monitors whole-class assessments as a means of verifying teacher progress. As teachers currently do not receive the most challenging and rigorous targets, it is difficult to understand whether achievement of real student progress takes place.

The school uses the Acuity system effectively to track individual student progress. This helps teachers understand the specific learning deficiencies of their students. The process provides teachers with new strategies to inform their instruction. Changes occur immediately when data shows the need. The purchasing of additional academic intervention staff in math is a good example. The principal attends all subject department meetings in order to have an oversight of the effect of interim tests. This ensures a consistency of approach in how each department uses the data. All members of staff involve themselves in the process of setting new school goals, from re-visiting curriculum plans to setting subject goals. The outcomes form discussions with the principal, who in turn works with the senior leadership team. It is a collaborative process, but one which is yet to challenge every teacher to build their students’ academic potential. The principal has a strong vision for the school to expand the arts program further and provide teachers with a more robust “toolkit” for differentiated teaching.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Clinton School for Writers and Artists</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>			X		

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?			X		
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?					X
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			<b>X</b>		

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			<b>X</b>		

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>