



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Coalition School for Social Change

High School 409

**220 West 58th Street
New York
NY 10019**

Principal: Eileen Miller Cohen

Dates of review: February 13 - 14, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Andy McClean

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Coalition School for Social Change is a high school with 420 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 33% Black, 65% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 80.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 72% eligibility.

The school shares a converted office building with another high school with a shared canteen, library and gym. Students also share the school entrance and stairways to access all parts of the building. The school has a number of difficulties with the use of these limited facilities, with constricted access to some classrooms and the lack of a suitable auditorium and communal spaces.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Principal and senior staff show great determination to raise achievement for all students.
- Students enjoy a positive rapport with teachers based on mutual trust.
- Special education students and English language learners receive effective support to help them achieve their full potential.
- A collegial and mutually supportive staff shares a rewarding dialogue on school improvement.
- Personal and emotional guidance for students provides good support for their individual growth.
- Data systems produce good information to identify students in greatest need of support.
- The principal and school community understands the school's priorities for future development and change.
- Strategic decisions to achieve goals are based in good analysis of a wide variety of data.
- Clear procedures to address discipline related incidents and encourage student participation ensure the smooth running of the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Use conclusions drawn from more frequent classroom observations to share the good aspects of instruction already present in school.
- Use professional development to enable staff to achieve greater differentiation and challenge for all students.
- From current discussion on school improvement, ensure all staff understand and share school goals to improve student progress.
- Find ways to redress the decline in attendance.

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.

Since the previous Quality Review, greater evaluation and sharing of lessons learned from professional development now exist. Collation and use of data to address the needs of special education students and English language learners have improved, as has the use of data to monitor attendance, with a few tangible results. Special education students and English language learners receive focused support based on a wide range of data. Teachers provide more classes which results in greater exam success for specific students. However, a vision for the rigorous improvement of student performance, across the whole school, is not yet present. Employment of a full-time literacy coach and assistant principal to improve instruction demonstrates the principal's determination to address these key areas.

The principal works effectively with assistant principals and coaches to formulate challenging whole school goals. Senior staff scrutinizes data thoroughly. This results in their common understanding of the steps the school needs to implement to improve academic standards. Communication of how to achieve these improvements, through their consistent implementation by all staff, is in the process of development. A collegial staff is aware of this challenge to ensure that the best instructional methods, evident in some classes, become the school norm. At present, there is a lack of consistent, differentiated, high quality instruction in all classes. To this end, coaches and senior staff show great drive in implementing a new program of professional development. In conjunction with a wider program of classroom observations and direct support for teachers by coaches, the school is in the process of identifying what is good instruction. Senior staff accepts this area as key to improving student success. They have begun to implement robust systems of both support and challenge to ensure all teachers plan, instruct and assess to a common format. A successful example of collaboration is the detailed explanation of new vocabulary to students in classes by all teachers. Inquiry Team analysis in recent months supports this aspect. Through its study of a group of grade 8 students, the team is searching to find a common approach for the whole school to address the decoding of text. The school has begun some positive initiatives to take on the challenge of improving instruction. However, issues of attendance and behavior continue to take priority to the detriment of improving instruction.

Guidance counselors provide sympathetic, confidential support on a daily basis to many students, specifically to those who find education demotivating. As a result of such good support, the school runs smoothly and harmony is evident through consistent application of a code of conduct. The principal's and counselors' open door policy meets students' social and emotional needs very effectively. As a result, students trust their teachers and show respect for the extra support that teachers devote as a matter of course.

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.

Immediately on entry all students in grade 9 receive a common reading test. Results of this test enable teachers to understand levels of student comprehension. Support for special education students and English language learners are well organized. A successful initiative by special education teachers ensures that any data, academic or personal, passes to individual teachers. This fosters very good support and instruction for these students in school. English language learners receive good support from faculty members to ensure their comprehension in classes. Their support teachers use data effectively to analyze their needs and track progress. However, the school chooses to address the literacy needs of all students, rather than focus on those students who find new vocabulary a barrier to their progress.

All other students in the school are treated as one group and so students generally receive too little differentiation. High ability students in particular remain unchallenged in most of their learning. The inquiry team directs its focus on a group of grade 8 low achievers. Conclusions drawn from their study so far enable teachers across the school to begin to adopt common solutions to student difficulties. As yet it is too early to draw conclusions from their work. Teachers in the team experiment with simple codes to interpret new vocabulary. Data obtained from this study is in the process of scrutiny, to assist with monitoring any significant student progress.

The principal and senior staff use data from the school's past performance to analyze trends and areas in need of improvement. Relatively good progress of Black and Hispanic students is an example used to share successful methods of instruction with the faculty. School leaders use data to compare their progress with similar schools. Other faculty members have limited opportunities to do so. For example, successful methods to analyze data and progress of special education students await adoption on a school-wide basis.

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.

Teachers work well together to seek ways in which to address barriers to student learning. Data shows a need to address students' comprehension of class vocabulary as vital to improve results. Teachers also collaborate, in conjunction with the inquiry team, to begin to use common methods which help students decode text on test papers. Special education students receive focused and very effective support as a result of challenging goals derived from regular tracking. The school recognizes the need to raise the achievement of all students. New measures, introduced by coaches and the assistant principal with responsibility for instruction, result in the faculty's better understanding of the need to provide all levels of student ability with higher learning

goals. The faculty is in the process of developing a greater understanding of the key school goal to raise instruction to the level of some good practice that already exists. Teachers understand that this will be fundamental to setting higher academic challenges for all students.

Students receive good counseling aimed at improving attendance and standards of behavior. All staff rigidly enforces a recent drive to reduce the use of cell phones and other electronic devices. The next identified step, recently put in place, is an initiative to improve student time management. Teachers realize the need to encourage promptness at the start of classes, as well as full-time attendance. Despite such positive measures, trends in attendance at school show a decline. Students respect the school's insistence on such measures. They appreciate rewards given for full attendance and summer day trips to celebrate school successes. Parents receive newsletters and telephone communications to encourage full attendance. Difficulties arise with parental contact as a result of the wide area from which students travel to attend school. The whole faculty devotes much time to ensure a calm and secure environment exists in school. At present, rigorous pursuit of academic improvement takes second place to challenges in behavior and attendance.

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 proficient.

Difficulties with facilities limit students' participation in the Arts and gym. However, successful contributions to a local bank's "art gallery" produce justified pride from student artists. Musical events enhance the curriculum. The school's very successful participation in a Berlin Philharmonic concert brings great pride to students, teachers and parents. Current concentration to ensure all students understand academic vocabulary in classes and tests is appropriate. The literary coach ensures that all colleagues have good support to make this a key focus of their instruction. Initial measures, such as the dissemination of inquiry team findings, address this problem with their explanation of decoding techniques to other colleagues. The school recognizes development of greater challenge to all students as a major area for improvement. Initial moves to make better use of school and individual data to improve differentiation in instruction show promise. However, few classes demonstrate differentiation of work and the challenge of more difficult tasks particularly for those with higher ability.

Employment of a new assistant principal with specific responsibility to improve instruction shows good strategic management. Similarly, the recent extension of the literacy coach's position to full time is a calculated response to address identified student need. The faculty understands the nature of challenges students face in their lives outside school. In response, teachers and support staff strive to make the school environment safe and secure. Despite improvements and consistently applied efforts to improve attendance and tardiness, it continues as a major challenge to the school.

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.

School leaders and coaches participate in a limited number of classroom observations. The appointment of an assistant principal with the specific brief to ensure consistency of high-quality instruction in all classes is a very recent and positive development. Few opportunities exist at present for teachers to see and reflect on their own performance and that of colleagues and to discuss what is best practice particularly with regard to greater differentiation. Grade level and department meetings occur on a regular basis. At present, such meetings do not provide ample time or direction to enable staff to address the key challenge for the school of sharing effective practice.

Well-established support services to enhance students' personal development exist in school. Guidance staff, with very good support from all colleagues, ensure students with "life" problems receive honest and confidential counseling. This is a key feature that boosts students' confidence in their teachers' commitment to their progress. Placements for students in the Manhattan District Attorney's office allow them to appreciate the world of work. Grade 10 students participate eagerly in the Big Brother/Big Sister program. Partnerships with local theater, dance and music groups such as the Bette Midler Jekyll Foundation motivate student engagement.

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 principal and senior leaders demonstrate great determination to raise the achievement of all students. The recent employment of senior staff to address barriers to the realization of this vision demonstrates the principal's urgent commitment to meeting such aims. Recent scrutiny of data leads to the school's current concentration on improving comprehension of vocabulary by all students. This specific goal has clear time frames and success criteria. Goals to produce more challenging instruction in a consistent whole school manner also exist, with suitable timings and projected ways to assess progress. Teachers review the effectiveness and suitability of curriculum maps at the start of each semester. From such scrutiny, teachers modify their instruction and seek other ways to assess student progress. Senior teachers reflect on strengths and weaknesses found in school. Special education students and English language learners receive regular and effective assessments of their progress and diagnostic measures and test results lead to adjustments in their programs of support. Teachers also use similar tests and quizzes to measure the progress of other students in their classes. However, the outcomes of these tests do not lead to greater differentiation of challenge for the majority of students.

Strategic scheduling, budgeting and staffing all contribute to achievement of school goals. The school achieves success in the provision of a caring environment where all students feel secure. It has plans to improve academic rigor to match these high levels of care and concern for its students although these have not yet been implemented.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Coalition School for Social Change	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			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			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X		

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.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					

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.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped