



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

School of the Future

Middle/High School 413

**127 East 22nd Street
New York
NY, 10010**

Principal: Stacy Goldstein

**May 12-13, 2008
Lead Reviewer: Alexis Penzell**

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

Progress made since the last review
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 School of the Future is a middle/high school with 673 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 23% Black, 29% Hispanic, 34% White, and 14% Asian students. The student body includes only 4 English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 45.6% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54.4%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school, as a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools, serves as a model of its principles.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The new principal and co-director work as a team to identify the school's strengths and areas for development.
- The school operates a shared and distributive leadership model where collaboration, facilitation and student success are highly considered.
- Content and grade structures reveal strong curriculum development, strategies for improving teaching and learning and extensive professional development.
- The school consistently conveys high expectations for students' academic and personal growth to students, staff and parents.
- The administration provides ongoing support for all teachers to grow professionally and holds staff accountable for teaching and learning.
- In the past year, the school has made significant progress in the development of systems and structures for the collection of data to monitor student performance.
- Parents value the open communication with them, personalization of learning, and warm, nurturing relationships that the school has with their students.
- Advisories, guidance and grade teams ensure ongoing monitoring, support and targeted interventions for students at risk.
- Through the new democratic initiative, 'SAV', the school has empowered students to make decisions involving their governance with administration.
- The school is very clear about its core purpose and is structured and organized effectively to achieve it.

What the school needs to improve

- Set data based goals for each student and teacher that are objectively measurable, and develop goal setting with clear time frames for achievement.
- Compare the school's current performance to its own past performance, assessing progress over time.
- Extend opportunities for more arts as part of the daily curriculum for all grades.
- Build on the steps already taken to complete a strategic, long-range plan for the future of the school.

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 well developed.

The new administrative team consisting of both a middle and high school director, with the middle school director also serving as the principal, has continued the vision for the school's development. They hold all teachers accountable for instruction, and meeting school-wide goals for formative assessment and differentiation. Many opportunities exist for good, staff-driven professional development. The principal knows individual students very well and can identify individual student's special needs in each class.

Student success is the result of effective teacher assessment and excellent understanding of their progress which is monitored through grade and department meetings as well as advisories. Systems for monitoring whole school planning are becoming more effective. Teachers use this data to set learning goals supported by small group instruction and tutoring that, for the most part, takes place outside of the classroom. However, they do not make full use of past performance or of interim goals and time frames to measure the progress and impact of ongoing strategies or to plan strategically for the long-term. Moreover, the school has an incomplete picture of performance trends from year to year. Instruction focuses on meeting students' needs through a workshop model, fostering skills that gradually move them towards self-sufficiency and independence. Each department has developed a skills-based curriculum spiraling from grade 6 to 12. The arts are offered in some grades yet choices are limited. There is a strong commitment by teachers to meeting in multiple configurations with regular school wide, common discussion time. Effective systems ensure the smooth operation of the school and promote excellent behavior, high attendance, joy of learning and an atmosphere of trust and respect. Advisories, academic support and guidance are very effective in keeping students on track to achieve academic, social and emotional goals. Community service and internships matched to students' interests are the result of strong outreach with partnerships and the community.

The school has made some progress in addressing issues raised in the previous Quality Review. The progress report and grading system have been revamped to assess skills, understandings and work habits. Most of the school has moved to using 'Easy Grade Pro' for sharing student progress. It has further improved high school teachers' access to individual student data through the 'Advisory at a Glance'. Plans are in place to address goals linked to specific targeted groups by grade. The school's inquiry team is focusing on students in the lowest third in the middle school, especially those in grade 8, whose performance levels in English language arts are one to two years below grade level. Interim assessments indicate that students have made progress and are waiting for results of reading tests to confirm that progress.

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 well developed.

The school does a very good job collecting data that includes formative and summative assessments and notes from individual student conferences. There are good systems and procedures in place to make this data accessible to all the teachers, ensuring they have a good understanding of individual student performance and progress, and at class and grade level. Teachers use this understanding to inform instruction and provide intervention through small group instruction. Baseline assessments to determine reading levels and writing and math diagnostics are administered. Analysis provides a clear understanding of early student achievement and benchmarks to measure future progress. It also identifies early academic intervention groups for grades 6 through 9. The school is creating Design Your Own assessments and is currently developing ongoing writing and problem solving assessments. Data of individual grades has shown that the middle school needs to strengthen literacy skills and is the focus of their inquiry work. The school pays special attention to the progress of special education students and support teachers have developed a common "boiler plate" for note taking on individual students that allows them to evaluate progress, matching their observations to effective strategies for developing skills. Staff training in analysis and use of data continues to refine teacher expertise, enabling use of summative as well as formative data in order to understand performance and progress of individuals, classes and subgroups. Although the performance of some groups, such as special education, is analyzed, the focus of analysis is more on individuals, classes, grades, and subjects, rather than subgroups and past performance. Due to this, the school has an incomplete picture of performance trends and patterns. School leaders compare their performance to other schools in and outside of their peer group, and continue to visit them to assess and learn best practices to bring back and consider.

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 well developed.

Goal setting for students and grades is a collaborative activity. Students have opportunities to meet with their advisors and discuss progress towards their goals, raising their awareness of what they need to do to improve and move towards increasing independence. Apart from special education, individual and department goals do not have time frames for achievement and interim benchmarks en route and, as a result, progress is not linked to smaller achievable goals. There is a culture of continual review and improvement with many layers of support provided. Students move in and out of these supports as necessary, thereby maintaining the progress of students most in need. New this year is the high school Advisory at a Glance that gives teachers a profile of each student as a learner based on diagnostics, assessment, performance and surveys. This information allows teachers to differentiate instruction based on individual strengths and learning styles.

Students enjoy their classes and are eager to attend school. Parents are positive about the excellent exchange of information between home and school and its open door policy. "Communication is wonderful. You can always reach somebody or you can just walk in the door." said one parent and others agreed. Teachers regularly email and phone, keeping parents informed of students' progress. The school recently revised the report cards to ensure that they give attention to targeted skills development. Expectations are extremely high and shared by students, parents and teachers. The school effectively develops 'habits of mind', as well as academic skills and expects students to go to college and achieve their personal goals. Although the school has a waiver for Regents, students this year took the English language arts and integrated math Regents with a pass rate in the mid-nineties percentile. The school has seen significant improvements in the achievements of all students.

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 curriculum is strong, with depth valued over breadth of offerings. There are common rubrics, action plans and growth portfolios. Teachers develop unit plans that include diagnostic, formative and summative assessments. Although electives are limited, middle school students select from a menu of choices and challenging assignments and quizzes. High school students can choose between electives and ability based, challenging courses, such as 'Turn to the Right' and 'Democratization of America'. They are very excited about the new school wide student government, whose members are democratically elected and deal with issues and protocols of concern. This structure distributes leadership beyond the administration and staff. The arts are offered in some grades and integrated into many courses, yet choices are limited. Both parents and students would like to see them offered as part of the regular day. Differentiation occurs in student configurations such as group work, literature circles, partner reading and targeted small group instruction. All classes are heterogeneous and special education students are in all classes. There are very few English language learners and all teachers are aware of differentiating instruction to support their language skills development. Attendance is very good and students enjoy coming to school. Relationships are highly valued and contribute strongly to the school as a learning community. Individual and school success are honored and celebrated. Students and parents feel the deep sense of trust and mutual respect that exists. Students appreciate support and guidance, recognizing that their coursework and experiences prepare them for life beyond high school. One student commented, "The things we do in class are a fun way to learn. Teachers show how what you learn connects to real life".

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 well developed.

The school is particularly effective at helping teachers improve classroom skills and organizes professional development well. There are frequent walkabouts, observations and analysis of data by the co-directors and coaches, each of whom has a good

understanding of the quality of learning. Frequent feedback details what teachers do well and suggested goals for student improvement. As a result, professional development and support are differentiated. Teachers evaluate their professional needs and develop plans to meet both personal and school-wide goals. Teachers new to the profession or the school receive before school orientation, attend the summer institute, and receive senior teacher, coach, grade and department support.

The school is designed around collaboration. There are grade level team meetings, vertical department meetings and common planning time with special education teachers, coaches and partner teachers. Teachers meet weekly to collaborate on the content of their teaching and share student understanding and resources. Peer observation is common and teachers frequently “drop in” to classrooms to observe a particular lesson, see strategies in action, and observe how a student who struggles in their class performs in another. Teachers discussed the culture of giving peer feedback with “warm notes” and frequent emails letting each other know when they are doing a particular type of lesson so others can visit, and “learn from each other”. Guidance counselors, including one who serves as the college advisor, support the teachers and faculty as part of a team effort. As one of them said, “We’re raising these kids together.” Students, parents and faculty appreciate the consistency in discipline procedures.

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 new co-directors have developed a clear sense of direction for this year and are developing a plan for moving the school forward. They are focused on improving student outcomes through use of assessments, collection of varied data and support for learning outcomes. Teachers have embraced the use of diagnostic tools and assessments to set baselines, measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions and make necessary adjustments. However, interim goals are not yet in place for both students and teachers to reach their performance targets but frequent meetings and timely evaluations ensure that teachers change and modify programs as soon as evidence shows it is required but the lack of specific success criteria and timelines make it more difficult to evaluate whether the pace of improvement is sufficient. The school plans to analyze trends and patterns in performance against this year’s, to continue to make informed strategic instruction and intervention decisions. When the school recognized that progress reports did not give students and parents a clear enough understanding of their progress, they revised it to reflect both skills and desired learning outcomes. The school is progressing well in the process of reflecting on practice and establishing a clear direction for its future.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: School of the Future	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?				*	
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					X

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					X

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