



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Vanguard High School**

**High School 449**

**317 East 67 Street  
New York  
NY 10065**

**Principal: Louis Delgado**

**Dates of review: April 7 - 8, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Jean Mackie**

# 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

Vanguard is a high school with 395 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 36% Black, 53% Hispanic, 8% White, and 2% Asian students. A small number of students come from other ethnic backgrounds. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 84.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 67% eligibility. The school is a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal provides inspirational leadership to the school.
- The school has developed an exceptionally comprehensive electronic data system for tracking student progress and monitoring performance at all levels within the institution.
- Data has been used well to identify and provide focused interventions for those students in need of support as a result of slow progress or underachievement.
- Students respond well to the opportunities that teachers provide for them to work in groups and share their ideas.
- Data has been used well to make modifications to the scheduling, introduce new courses and tackle attendance.
- Students and parents value the extensive support and guidance offered by course teachers and advisors.
- Relationships within the whole school community are very strong, with high levels of mutual respect evident.
- There is a strong emphasis on professional development which is well-focused on building the capacity of the staff.
- Teachers meet frequently at both grade and departmental level to plan collaboratively and to evaluate practice.
- There is good capacity within the school to secure further improvement.

### What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen goal setting for individual students so that they are more aware of their next learning steps.
- Use the extensive data base to establish measurable interim goals within the school improvement plan so that progress towards annual goals can be more easily measured.
- Continue work on developing rubrics to ensure consistency of expectations across subjects.
- Continue to support staff to ensure that data is consistently used to inform differentiated instruction.
- Build on the initial explorations into the gender achievement gap to identify strategies that will lead to further engagement and improved progress for boys.

## Part 3: Main Findings

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

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

### **Overall Evaluation**

#### **This school is well developed.**

The principal's drive and vision is reflected in the way in which staff and students are empowered to contribute actively to the future development of the school. The administration has adopted a determined approach to tackling the issues in the previous Quality Review. Twelfth grade teachers have established a common format and scoring system for assessing the Habits of Mind and grade team meetings have been used to facilitate the sharing of rubrics. These steps are leading to greater consistency although there remains some variation in levels of expectations across subjects. The school is piloting the assessment of social and emotional factors through two advisory groups and is carefully monitoring outcomes with a view to full implementation in 2008-2009. All of these developments are included in a clear strategic plan, which has measurable annual goals. The comprehensive database now in place enables the school to analyze student performance in a very sophisticated manner and at all levels. Progress towards the annual goals is quantifiable. The plan lacks measurable interim goals, however, to strengthen this process and inform possible amendments in the light of evaluation.

The curriculum has been designed to provide a wide and varied experience for the students. It is underpinned by a strong focus on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching is often lively, with good opportunities for students to develop the collaborative and reflective approaches expected from the six Habits of Mind. Students respond positively and support each other in their work. Data is used systematically to inform interventions for students but its use to inform differentiated instruction in class is less firmly embedded. Teachers are ambitious for their students and provide much valued support and guidance to them, both personally and academically. Students are not always sure, however, about their next steps in learning. Relationships are very secure with mutual respect clearly evident. The strong collaborative approach among teachers ensures that professional development is well focused. The work of the inquiry team has been particularly effective in securing stronger assessment practices.

### **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 outstanding.**

The school has developed an extremely impressive database that brings together the whole range of test and assessment information that it gathers regarding the performance and progress of its student population. In this way, it is able to analyze, at the touch of a button, how well students are doing at individual, class and subject level. Credit

accumulation is very closely monitored, as is progress towards graduation. In addition to scrutinizing 8th grade results, the school undertakes diagnostic assessments in mathematics and English to gain a clear understanding of students' achievement levels on entry to the 9th grade. This data is shared across the faculty so that everyone is aware of the students' starting points and can plan accordingly. The school quickly identifies special education students and their progress is regularly checked through close scrutiny of their individualized education plans. The small number of English language learners are similarly monitored through specific language tests in addition to the school based assessment systems. The school monitors the performance of all subgroups very closely and has noted the comparatively weaker progress of 9th graders, especially boys. It has already taken a number of positive steps to tackle this issue.

The school has a very well established program of performance based assessment tasks, which underpin graduation requirements. Periodic assessments in mathematics and English language arts, plus regular checks on understanding in other subjects enable teachers to track progress over time. The staff have developed sophisticated rubrics to support these processes and have shared them with students so that they have a clear understanding of their performance levels. There remain some inconsistencies in the expectations reflected by the rubrics in different subjects, however, which the staff are aware of and are working to refine. The school uses its close relationships with other Consortium partners to benchmark its work and student outcomes. Staff have good knowledge of and regularly use technology to display and interpret student performance data. Students and parents can access this information directly and many do so.

**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.**

The school's strong culture of collaboration is evident in the way that it has approached the setting of strategic goals. All staff are actively engaged in the process and, as a result, are committed to the identified priorities for improving outcomes for students. The goals are measurable and clearly based on a thorough analysis of what is working well and where improvements need to be made. Departments have their own plans, which appropriately reflect the school's overall priorities.

The school uses entry data and diagnostic tests to group students and to quickly identify those in need of additional interventions. Some students, for example, are targeted for specific support to strengthen basic literacy and numeracy skills. Special education students are also supported through co-taught classes. Teachers and support staff work very closely together to ensure that students gain maximum benefit from these sessions. Classes are small so that teachers can more easily target those students who are struggling or finding the work easy. Teachers provide advisory support for a designated group of students covering all four grades. They know their students very well and ensure, through regular group and individual meetings, that each one is aware of their progress towards credit accumulation and graduation. Advisors negotiate schedules that match the needs and aspirations of their students. They also monitor their social and emotional needs, providing focused support for those who are vulnerable or at risk.

Subject teachers and advisors continuously communicate high aspirations to parents and students. There is a strong focus on preparing for college and an expectation that students will see this as their next step. Teachers put all assessment data on to an

electronic system so that students and parents can see at a glance how well they are doing. Written reports are extensive and informative. This approach is proving very motivational for students, who are eager to see the progress they are making. They are less clear about what they have to do to achieve their next steps in learning, however.

**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.**

Teachers have developed a rich and engaging curriculum. The school uses periodic assessments and course passing rates systematically to identify the effectiveness of each program and to inform any necessary changes to the master schedule. The math Foundation classes and skill specific reading and writing classes have been introduced as a result of these reviews. The core curriculum is enhanced with an imaginative range of electives. Departments also plan extended day plus summer school sessions to consolidate students’ learning. Sports are offered within the building and the school encourages clubs for activities such as dance. Trips further enhance student experiences.

Teachers are fully aware of their accountability for the outcomes of their students. Lessons are closely focused on developing the six Habits of Mind, a founding principle of the school. As a result, the teachers provide many opportunities for students to work collaboratively in groups and to develop a reflective approach to their studies. Students frequently respond positively, engage actively in class and provide regular support to each other. Students select their own focus for project work, but teachers’ use of data to inform differentiated instruction through, for example, tiered assignments, is less firmly embedded. The small community, strong advisory support and full commitment of the staff to their students, all contribute to the remarkably positive relationships within the school. The climate of mutual respect is very much valued by students and parents. The judicious decisions of the principal regarding scheduling and staffing have also contributed to the strong support, both academic and personal, for the students. Small classes and effective support teams are just two examples. The school has also provided focused advisory time for students with frequent absences and this, along with other rigorous actions, has contributed to improved attendance rates.

**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 administrators visit classrooms regularly, both formally and informally, so that they can gauge the effectiveness of the implementation of key policies and the quality of teaching and learning. This information complements data collected by and from teachers about their instructional needs. The resulting professional development program is consequently very well matched to the school’s priorities and those of individuals. A recent focus has been the training of staff in the use of the electronic system for recording student assessment data. All teachers are now competent and confidence is growing rapidly. The Habits of Mind philosophy underpins the collaboration and reflective practices among the staff as well as the students. Departments train new members on their approaches to performance based assessment. Teachers share ideas at grade as well as

department meetings in their enthusiasm to learn from each other. Members of the support teams also play a full role in meetings to ensure that their expertise is shared and developed. The school effectively draws on its close links with higher education institutions to provide additional professional development opportunities. Teachers new to the school value highly the support provided by the administration and other colleagues. They have quickly adjusted to the culture and practices of the school.

The various groups within the school work very well together to ensure that students receive the guidance they need to be successful in school and the wider community. The expectations placed upon them to present and defend their ideas through the performance based assessment tasks promote a notable self-confidence. The students and staff are fully familiar with, and follow, the daily routines, which helps to ensure an orderly community. Any inappropriate behavior is dealt with in a timely fashion. The school has a good number of links with a range of organizations to support its work in building the capacity of both staff and students.

**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 well developed.**

The school's comprehensive systems for analyzing data means that it is able to measure progress towards the quantitative annual goals established in its strategic plan. The plan does not have measurable interim goals, however, to strengthen the school's work in this respect or to inform amendments to the targets in the light of evaluation. Nevertheless, the school is continually looking to improve. It has used its data well to identify, for example, that the lowest achieving group of students are progressing in line with their peers because of well-focused interventions and classroom support. The school scrutinizes passing rates for courses and has linked weaker outcomes with poorer attendance figures. As a result, the school has introduced a rotating schedule so that classes take place at different times in the day. This, along with other actions to improve attendance, is having a positive impact on results. Additional courses have been established for students with low literacy and numeracy skills. Class data has been used to regroup students and ensure that staff are carefully matched to the demands of the courses that they teach. Teachers use data continually to reflect on student progress and to amend their groupings and instructional approaches where the need arises. Interventions are also modified in the light of evaluation. Students are active participants in evaluating their peers during performance based assessment tasks and provide helpful feedback on where improvements could be made. The reflective practices promoted within the school guarantee that the principal and his staff respond flexibly and responsively to the ongoing needs of the students. The school demonstrates good capacity to secure further improvement.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Vanguard High School</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 demanding, 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?				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?				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>