



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Manhattan Bridges High School

High School 542

525 West 50th Street

New York

NY 10019

Principal: Mirza Sanchez- Medina

Dates of review: December 3 - 4, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Roger Holmes

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Manhattan Bridges High School is a high school with 469 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 100% Latino students. The student body includes 81% English language learners and 0.4% 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 85.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 82.6% eligibility.

The school shares its building with several other schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students make remarkably good progress in Manhattan Bridges H S, having come into the school at very early stages of learning English.
- The school makes highly effective use of data to raise students' performance.
- The principal's very effective leadership inspires the school community with the belief that every student can achieve well.
- There is high-quality support and professional development for teachers, which leads to consistently effective approaches to English language learning.
- There is a strong sense of commitment and teamwork among teachers, so that they share their strengths and provide mutual support.
- The school has efficient organization and procedures so that it runs smoothly and teachers can concentrate on providing effective instruction.
- The curriculum is very well matched to the needs of the students, with a clear focus on learning English through all subjects, while continuing to value Spanish.
- There is very effective support for the personal development of students so that they grow in maturity and self-confidence.
- Students are very aware of their current levels of performance and know what to do to improve.
- The school has encouraged the students to adopt very positive attitudes to learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to explore the reasons for the erratic attendance of a few students and address them, so that these students come to school more regularly.
- Use existing knowledge of individual students' performance to identify those whose levels of achievement can be raised.
- Use prior student achievement data to set the school's goals for improvement.

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.

Students achieve remarkably well at Manhattan Bridges High School. Almost all of them are only just beginning to learn English when they come into the school at Grade 9. They make very rapid progress and the great majority is on track to accumulate the grades they need for a Regents diploma. In 2007, the first graduating year, 70% of the students graduated and all were accepted into college. Almost all of the remaining students are expected to graduate this year.

This very positive picture is a result of the vision, determination and leadership skills of the principal, who founded the school four years ago. She has built and inspired a highly dedicated team of senior staff and teachers who share her vision and work very successfully together to make the vision reality. Students appreciate the special attention that they receive at the school, which led one student to comment that, "it's like a family." Students are expected to work hard but know that it is worth it.

The school has established very effective data analysis systems to measure performance. Students know how well they are doing and how they can improve. The information is used very effectively to plan lessons and to provide imaginative additional support. The school sets very challenging goals for itself, which guide its development, but at the moment these are not sufficiently linked to the performance of individual students. Teachers are supported very effectively in using data and the well-planned professional development program helps to ensure a consistent approach to teaching English throughout the curriculum. The school runs smoothly and there is a very positive climate, which encourages learning. Behavior is good in the school but, although attendance is above average, it does not reflect the high level of commitment that students usually demonstrate. Parents are closely involved in the work of the school and strongly support its aims. The school has many partnerships that support its work, for example providing placements for interns. The inquiry team is focusing on the development of reading and writing at Grade 11, where its work is leading to improvements. Several effective curriculum developments have already followed from this work.

The school has made good progress since its last review, addressing all of the issues that were raised and continuing to develop the specialized curriculum for English language learners.

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 uses its data systems very effectively to measure the performance of individual students in their different subjects and teaching groups. Teachers use this information very effectively to plan their lessons, matching the work closely to the needs of the students. They have been assisted in this by the effective professional development program which has focused on the understanding and analysis of data. Students know how they are performing as a result of the feedback they receive from teachers and from the guidance team. Their progress towards graduation is displayed on the guidance bulletin board. Students use this information regularly to see what they need to do to succeed. Grades at the end of each marking period are collected and used to ensure that each student is making sufficient progress. The school has identified those students at risk of falling behind and monitors their progress even more frequently. This procedure is particularly strong for English language learners and results in frequent adjustments to the teaching program, based on an analysis of the specific skills that student need to acquire. Students are supported very effectively when they need extra help through additional lessons before and after school and on Saturdays.

The school tracks all groups of students very carefully as they move through the school. The data shows that they make very good progress, particularly in learning English, and also in the other subjects of the curriculum. The first graduating class in 2007 achieved well, much better than similar ELL groups from other schools. Other groups in the school are on track to do similarly well.

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.

Staff work closely together to review performance data in order to set goals for improving the achievement of students. Students are tracked carefully and those who underperform are identified for additional support. Whole school goals are established, which include percentages of students expected to achieve Regents diplomas and other measures such as levels of attendance. These goals are widely publicized in the school community and are known to everyone. There is widespread agreement that they represent appropriate aims to be pursued. The importance of high academic achievement is stressed relentlessly. Students and their parents are made fully aware of the school's drive for high achievement from their first contact with the school. The message is reinforced constantly with reminders about the need to accumulate credits and make continuous progress in English. The consistency of the message, that great efforts are expected from the students, and the acceptance of this message by the whole school community are particularly strong features and contribute significantly to the school's success. Students who slip are counselled, often together with their parents. In this way the school tailors support to their individual needs and takes sensitive account of any personal problems that may impact academic performance. All parents are kept well informed about the

progress that their children are making. Parents are closely involved in the work of the school. They are generally very supportive and value the school's open door policy, which gives them access to senior staff at any time.

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 very well matched to the needs of the students. The school has carefully analyzed the situation faced by ELL students, who need to combine the acquisition of a new language and the development of detailed subject knowledge. The outcome is an innovative program of instruction, some conducted entirely in Spanish and some almost entirely in English. Data has been used very successfully to identify that many students need to develop reading comprehension and organization in their writing. Programs to develop these skills have been introduced into the work of different subject areas, so that students meet a consistent approach that constantly reinforces their learning. This high degree of integration is one of the features of the school that contributes to the rapid progress made by its students.

Lessons are often lively and stimulating. Teachers take a great deal of responsibility for the progress of their students. Students appreciate the efforts that teachers make to help them learn. "You get all the help you need" was how one student explained it. Senior staff are very aware of how well things are working in the classrooms, through frequent visits, analysis of data and from discussions with staff and students.

There is a very strong climate of mutual trust and respect in the school, which all groups mentioned. Staff and students feel supported and respected and also acknowledge their responsibilities. Personal development is a central part of the school's work and there is a very close connection between the work of the guidance team and academic staff. "It's about becoming an adult," said one senior student. As part of its program of support, the school works very hard to encourage good attendance. Although this is better than in most high schools, it is lower than Manhattan Bridges would like it to be and this is an area for continued development.

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 has very effective procedures for developing staff. There is an expectation that staff at all levels will be involved in learning and self-development. This helps to establish the school as a learning community for everyone. Formal professional development for teachers is planned carefully to meet the needs of individuals and to support the school goals. The program is extensive and demanding. Teachers find it relevant and well matched to their needs. "We don't have time to waste on the nonsense," they said. Teachers work well together and often watch each others' lessons. As a result there is considerable consistency of approach, particularly in the way ELL students are supported, which helps them learn better. New teachers are supported very effectively in the school and settle in rapidly. They are assigned mentors and receive extra support

from coaches plus informal assistance from colleagues. This reflects the schools family climate.

The school has very clear operating procedures that help to ensure that it runs smoothly. Because of this efficiency, teachers can concentrate on their work in the classrooms. Incidents of misbehavior are rare and when they occur they are dealt with effectively. Students are encouraged to take initiatives and they respond well, for example organizing a survey to find what worried people most in the school, training to present material to other students as part of the 'girls club' and working as peer tutors to help younger students learn. Students are proud of the wide range of cultural backgrounds that they have and value the language that they share. This all contributes to the sense of belonging that they feel in the school. As one student said, "Everyone has a different story, but we share the same dream."

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 has detailed data on the performance of each student. This data is used by guidance staff and by teachers to set goals for students, which are challenging but attainable. Progress toward these goals is monitored continuously, with more formal reviews at the end of each marking period. If there is any slippage between the expected rate of progress and what the data shows, rapid interventions are made and extra support is provided for students who are seen to be struggling. The school also sets appropriate plans and goals for teachers, which contribute the good quality of instruction that the students receive. The school's goals are set to match its high aspirations of achieving Regents diplomas for the great majority of all students. The ambitious goal of 90% reflects the school's determination to aim high, but it is not based on an analysis of students' predicted performance. The school has extensive information on the performance of individual students but does not make enough use of this data when setting overall targets.

School leaders and teachers make very effective use of performance data to review the effectiveness of the school's work. This analysis has led to well-planned improvements, such as changes in the timing of the school day and in the curriculum, such as the introduction of thematic approaches across several subjects. As a result, students make even better progress and the school's overall performance is rising.

The school is constantly seeking to improve. It is already performing very well, but refuses to become complacent. The whole school community shares a clear understanding of its overall purpose of providing bridges to a better life for its students. It is very well placed to keep moving forward.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Manhattan Bridges High School	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 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	
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?			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?				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 make 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	