



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers

High School 550

**250 West Street
New York
NY 10011**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers is a high school with 430 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 16% Black, 38% Hispanic, 20% White, and 26% Asian students. The student body includes 100% English language learners and 1% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 91%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility.

The school has developed from a one-year school, where students came when first entering the country, to a school with the full range of grades and a graduating school. All students are English language learners and enter the school when new to the country, often from troubled backgrounds.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- There is an outstanding environment of mutual trust and respect pervading the whole school.
- Staff know all students very well and as a result, students are very well supported ensuring they make good progress.
- The student support services are exceptional, supporting the students and their families.
- A very good range of outside agencies significantly supports the personal and academic growth of students.
- A very clear vision for the school meets the diverse needs of its students through a climate of reflection and innovation.
- English language learners are well supported through the use of data that helps teachers to identify and understand their specific needs.
- Data is used well to identify and help students in the greatest need of improvement.
- The school runs very effectively with few discipline issues, because of very clear procedures and the creation of a 'family' school.
- The curriculum is broad, well integrated and includes a significant emphasis on the arts enhancing communication and expression.
- Good professional development results in instruction clearly meeting the needs of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a whole school strategic plan with interim goals, to map the future of the school more clearly.
- Further develop lesson plans in classes so that differentiation and student expectations are more clearly based on prior progress.
- Refine the good systems already developed to enable teachers to monitor students' performance and progress even more effectively.
- Find ways of encouraging parents to take a greater and more active part in their children's education.

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 proficient.

Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers has created an outstanding climate for support and learning. The school is a “family”, where a very high level of mutual respect pervades. The school creates stability and continuity with a climate where students can begin to focus on learning and on realizing their academic potential. Every student and his or her family is known and supported. However, while parents are very supportive they do not take a very active role in their children’s education.

The administration makes very good use of a system for monitoring student performance but its use by teachers is less well developed. Teachers monitor the performance and progress of students’ English acquisition well. The school is also focusing well on students whose performance in mathematics is not meeting the school’s expectations.

Staff continually modify the curriculum to meet the needs of ever-changing groups of students, with differing requirements and ethnicities. The curriculum is well integrated so students can apply and consolidate their learning across subjects. However, differentiation in the classroom, based on students’ prior progress, is less consistent. Teachers invest highly in ensuring the students in their charge are fully engaged. Instruction is stimulating and relevant to students’ life in America, while respecting the very rich range of cultures they bring to the school. The school uses the budget very strategically to ensure all students gain academic and personal support. Support extends way beyond the school and includes numerous community-based organizations providing time, expertise and resources in health care, outdoor camps, sport and internships in addition to the schools own Saturday program.

While there is a clear vision for the school this is not articulated well through, for example, a strategic plan identifying the long-term goals with interim goals by which progress can be monitored. Despite the good progress made since the last Quality Review, some issues remain to be developed further and with greater consistency, such as improving differentiation in the classroom. The inquiry team is well established. It has focused on grade 11 students’ proficiency in Regents English language arts. To raise expectations, it is monitoring the differing ethnic needs in acquiring fluency in English rather than simply proficiency.

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.

The school has recently developed a very effective spreadsheet for monitoring the performance of students very well. It is now able to compare the performance of a great range of different ethnic groups, classrooms, grades and students very effectively. This is relatively new and is not yet being used consistently across the whole school. However, teachers are receiving training to enable them to use the performance data to identify progress more effectively. Teachers know their students very well indeed. They know not only their academic needs but also their family and personal circumstances, which often have a profound effect on students' performance and progress.

Teachers identify the very small number of special education students promptly and give them effective support. All students are English language learners. Students' performance and progress in language acquisition is monitored exceptionally well. The range of expertise, understanding and the identification of specific needs to enable students to access the broader curriculum is very effective. This is central to explaining why students make good progress in the school.

Continually changing cohorts make it difficult for the school to compare past and current performance. The school is beginning to make effective use of readily available data by developing its own comprehensive data system. This is improving its scrutiny of performance by enabling comparisons between the progress of cohorts as they move through the school. The school also makes significant efforts to compare its progress with other schools with similar populations.

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 are increasingly using their common planning time to meet and review data to set measurable performance goals for their students. These are not yet systematically based on students' prior progress. However, through the work of the inquiry team, the school has identified that students from different ethnicities need different strategies to acquire English, often based on their home language structures. The inquiry team is using gathered data well to modify the curriculum to meet the expectations of different groups of students more accurately. Teachers have also identified that the development of mathematical skills is a need for many students and is making good use of technology to implement a new program. This is supporting many students well but particularly those in the greatest need of improvement.

The staff is largely bilingual and often trilingual, enabling parents to receive a significant amount of school information, in a range of different languages. Parents support the school and there is a well-attended PTA. However, they largely think, "the school knows

best” and accept what the school suggests. They receive information about curriculum and student goals but they do not take an active part in their children’s learning. Students are largely mature, take responsibility for their own learning and rise to the school’s high expectations.

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

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The school is using a computer program to create a well-integrated curriculum to meet more closely the specific needs of this diverse population. Students are enabled to apply and consolidate the knowledge, understanding and skills learnt in one area of the curriculum in another, enhancing learning. For example, new curriculum initiatives in English and mathematics are making greater use of carefully selected technology to enhance learning and ensure students’ needs are met well. Although the building is cramped, the school provides a good range of facilities in the arts within and outside the school day. There is a small gym, a music room and good links outside the school currently offering volleyball, basketball and bowling. Teachers are held responsible for the progress of students in their classes through a range of measures, including informal visits, intervisitations, data analysis and principal interviews. The very good collegiality in the school results in teachers also feeling very responsible for their colleagues.

Differentiation in meeting student needs is largely through the allocation of an increasing range of courses and classes. For example, the range of science courses has recently increased and there are plans to include more advanced courses to further challenge higher achieving students. Differentiation in lessons varies. While a good number of teachers differentiate well, this is inconsistent across the school. Budgeting is used to support the work of the school very well. Grants are diligently pursued to supplement income. Funding is used to supply a good range of support services, to provide professional development and to support teachers new to the profession. Procedures for monitoring attendance and tardiness are good. Phone calls are made in the parents’ own language the same day as students are absent. Native speakers visit homes and provide wake up calls at 5:30 am to ensure students traveling long distances are up in time to get to school.

The school learning environment, created since the current principal was appointed, is exemplary. Students come to this multilingual school from a very diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, often under tragic circumstances, yet these students come together in an environment of mutual support and respect, with a focus on learning. The friendly yet respectful relationships between all, including staff, and staff and students, is inspiring.

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 principal has a very detailed routine for informally visiting every class daily. The school has rubrics that inform teachers of things to consider during school “walk throughs”. There are frequent opportunities for teachers to participate in intervisitations and learning walks to encourage reflection on their own instructional practice.

Professional development is focused appropriately on developing greater use of data to improve differentiation further, based on students' prior achievement and progress. Although particular focus has resulted in some improvement, differentiation is still inconsistent. The administration is also using online surveys to identify the needs of teachers and therefore students. New teachers are given significant support through team teaching with an experienced colleague for a large part of their first year.

The guidance and advice given to support students and their parents is outstanding. Students feel safe in the school and see it as their "family" where issues, however complex or challenging, can and are addressed. Wherever possible they are given extensive support to resolve issues that often goes well beyond what is seen in most schools, for example, resolving family issues and personal safety. School advisory sessions are usually conducted in the student's own language. Art is an important part of the curriculum and is also used as a means of expression when verbal communications prove inadequate. The school uses other structures beyond the mandatory, such as conflict resolution classes. A good range of partnerships provides excellent support for students' personal and academic growth. These include a mobile health van, learning leaders, outdoor pursuits, Chelsea Piers sports facilities, and good links with the New York Natural History Museum and local firms that develop internships. This support fully engages students and results in the school running very smoothly with few discipline related incidents.

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.

Due to the continuing change and the very varied student populations entering the school, planning for the longer-term is difficult. Increasing stability has resulted in greater recognition for the good progress students make and the school is now creating long-term goals with interim goals against which to monitor progress. The inquiry team is giving a good lead in using data for monitoring the progress of acquisition of English by different ethnic groups, the results of which are being used to modify the curriculum to meet identified needs. Teachers are also involved in developing skills to make greater use of data to analyze student needs at classroom level more accurately. The school has also introduced a new mathematics scheme making greater use of technology, and has longer-term goals to use technology more widely across the school.

The administration has a clear vision for the school. It uses data and other diagnostic measures to monitor the implementation of curricular changes and professional development, modifying approaches as required. This is ensuring that teachers use data more effectively to increasingly differentiate instruction based on students' prior progress. However, these are not articulated clearly in a school development plan, and so not encompassed and understood by the whole school community.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers	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					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