



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Satellite Academy High School

High School 570

**120 West 30th Street
Manhattan
NY 10001**

Principal: Steve Zbaida

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Lead Reviewer: Alvin Jeffs

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Part 1: The school context

Satellite Academy High School is a high school with 832 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 99% Black and 1% Hispanic students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 7.5% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 79%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 77% eligibility.

Satellite Academy High School is a transition school that has operated for 30 years. It operates across multiple sites, with a central campus in Midtown South, Manhattan and one each in the Lower East Side, Queens and the Bronx. Each site has its own director.

Students are typically over-age and under-credited, having already attended one or more high schools. The school has a waiver from Regents requirements in all subjects except English language arts. Instead it has developed a performance-based assessment process, which involves student research and a major presentation, assessed by a board drawn from school staff. Each student belongs to a 'family' or small class. These families are the focal points for support and monitoring progress.

The school is an Empowerment school. Therefore, it has greater flexibility in making resource decisions such as purchasing professional development.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school restores students' faith in themselves as learners through the high levels of trust and respect, enabling them to achieve.
- Expectations for staff and students are very high motivating everyone to do their best.
- A wealth of data ensures that teacher and school leaders have an up-to-date understanding of student progress at all times.
- Performance-based assessment provides an excellent means for students to demonstrate their skills and aptitudes.
- Staff advisors support and monitor students very well within the 'family' groups.
- A highly imaginative project based curriculum engages and stimulates all students.
- Staff collaborate exceptionally well in setting and updating learning goals.
- Students and parents are fully involved in all decisions and target setting.
- An excellent senior staff team ensures that policies and developments are consistent across the four school sites.
- A responsive professional development program supports all new initiatives.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide further support and training to ensure that everyone gains the maximum benefit from the imaginative electronic data-sharing systems.
- Ensure that the same rigor exists in all departments with regard to the excellent performance-based learning assessments.
- Explore more innovative and creative opportunities to encourage parental involvement in students' 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 well developed.

Satellite Academy has a good track record for student graduation. This is not always reflected in official figures, as many students exceed the four-year graduation rule. Similarly, the success of its students in passing the school's performance-based assessments is very good, as is their success rate at college. These facts, together with the school's ability to provide high-quality personal support for all its students, underpin the popularity of the school with parents and students alike. The school uses a wealth of data, numerical, anecdotal and observational to monitor and assess student progress. Staff have become adept at bringing such data to reviews and case study meetings to ensure that underachievement is recognized as quickly as possible. Communication of information and collaboration in planning and curriculum teams is of the highest quality.

The curriculum places a strong emphasis on accelerated learning within the English language arts, complemented by the longer-term development of seven key study skills. This is further enriched with partnerships that bring artists into the school and support, for example, extensive college visit programs. Teaching throughout the school is of a very high standard, carefully monitored by administrators, coaches and colleagues. It is a very reflective school, with staff identifying professional development necessary for effective differentiation and student support in particular. Resourcing, scheduling and funding of initiatives are strengths of the school. Strategic planning arises from genuine discussion within the school and is modified in the light of student progress.

The last Quality Review identified three areas for improvement. These formed the basis of the school's development planning over the past year. There is now a clearer database identifying the skills and levels with which students enter the school. Assessment rubrics are developing well in all subjects. Considerable work and training have been carried out to establish a system that will allow the electronic transmission of data between sites and act as a central archive of documents.

The inquiry team has been very active in identifying targeted interventions for its new students. It has measured progress and assisted in enabling significant academic progress for this group. It has also been instrumental in devising more ways in which to systematize the development of students' written work. The many positive outcomes include enhanced tutoring, after-school programs, vacation courses and an accelerated student opportunity program.

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.

Satellite Academy High School is data-rich. The collection of data starts as soon as students enroll in the school. Each student's testing history is researched and early assessment identifies a baseline that allows the measurement of progress as students move through the school. It also generates a targeted intervention plan that allows early goal setting. This information is regularly supplemented with data from the eight-week assessment cycle and from student work samples. All data is passed to the student's 'family' group and coordinated by a teacher 'advisor' who acts as the key person for that student. The monitoring of special education students and English language learners is very detailed. Regular case meetings and informal discussions between teachers ensure that specific literacy needs are identified and addressed. The resource room, special education teachers and those with English as second language skills work closely with classroom teachers to provide support within classes and in 'pull out' settings.

The subgroups within Satellite Academy are unique due to the backgrounds of many students. The school carefully analyzes the needs and progress of their homeless students, young mothers, recently bereaved children and young carers. This analysis has resulted in many positive curriculum developments, such as a trauma response group, a gay and lesbian group and counseling programs related to gender. Careful analysis is also made of trends, comparing current with past performance. A consortium of transition schools enables regular comparisons with similar institutions. Much effective work has been carried out to develop electronic data transmission between sites. There is much more to be done, though, to ensure that all sites and all staff receive up-to-date information upon which to base planning discussions and individual target setting.

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.

Collaboration and regular goal setting are major strengths of the school. The school has weekly site-based meetings, monthly whole-school meetings and an annual summer retreat. This structure ensures that school priorities are kept in sharp focus. It also means that difficulties can be identified by staff at an early stage. At student level, regular reviews and case study meetings keep the needs of individuals at the forefront of teachers' thoughts. Within the 'family' group, a 'goal of the week' is set for each student. In addition, the advisory teacher has responsibility for the daily monitoring of student progress. Students say that it is the close and committed support of the advisor and the family that gives them the stamina to follow through with work and celebrate success. It is also the family advisory teacher who assists in identifying specific student needs.

Students attest to the high expectations of staff. This is often a new experience for them and assists them in regaining faith in themselves as learners. As one student put it,

“They put so many positive ideas in my head that I’ve come to believe it.” Their parents say the same thing, saying, “These people are genuine in wanting my child to succeed.” The comment highlights the excitement of parents, who are able to work with teachers who really know their child and have a personal commitment to their success. The high expectations are reinforced through real collaboration and target-setting between staff and students, with families fully involved where possible. Unfortunately, parental involvement is low. A parent coordinator has helped, but this still remains an area of concern for the school.

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.

At Satellite Academy, the curriculum provides an excellent basis for monitoring student progress. Intensive work on English language arts during the first semester is linked closely with the eight-week assessment cycle, where progress towards graduation is monitored. Emphasis on seven skill areas, including note-taking and revision, forms the basis of one-on-one discussions between teachers and students. The curriculum is imaginative and engages students well. It is also enriched by activities such as flamenco dancing and performance with professional actors.

The ‘portfolio’ is the major piece of work upon which graduation in most subjects is based. Topics chosen by students include ‘Multi-tasking and performance in math’ and ‘Developing a dream neighborhood.’ Work takes the form of a continuous dialogue between the student and relevant subject staff. The target is the successful presentation of the portfolio to a rigorous assessment panel. Performance-based assessment (PBA) is exceptional in providing a rigorous and sophisticated picture of a wide range of skills that the student has developed. It is also excellent preparation for college work, as the skills required are, in many instances, more demanding and forward-looking than those developed in conventional test-based courses. Rubrics and procedures for PBAs are generally excellent, but there is not always consistency in academic and assessment rigor across subjects. The school takes teacher accountability very seriously. Individual teachers agree on annual professional goals with senior staff. These goals are monitored throughout and at the end of the year, teachers’ reflections are collected and shared in book form with the staff. This is indicative of the outstanding climate of trust that permeates the school. It underpins all collaborative activities and presents a good model to students. Procedures to improve attendance are good. Students are made aware of the importance of attendance to the graduation process and attendance rates form a significant element of the data discussed at student reviews.

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.

Senior staff undertake structured classroom observations with detailed debriefings. These are supplemented with visits by coaches and consultants. Visits between staff

and between sites are considerable. These visits often focus on a specific aspect of teaching, such as the effectiveness of differentiation techniques. Many training needs are met within the transitional school consortium. Resident social workers and Morningside provide advisory skills. The professional development program is rich and often facilitated by colleagues from other sites. Thus, science teachers have benefited from the English department's involvement in developing literacy skills within their curriculum.

The orderly atmosphere within the school is a product of clear procedures and standards that apply across all sites. Movement around sites and within classrooms is mature and contributes well to an adult learning environment. A very well implemented peer mediation program supports this well.

The school has established many partnerships that support students and enhance the curriculum. Links with the Manhattan Theater Club and Irondale have brought valuable performance and role-play experiences into the curriculum. Involvement with the New York Writing Project has strengthened the response to extending literacy skills across the curriculum. There are also valuable links with a wide range of outside agencies to assist students with social and behavioral difficulties.

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 a strong culture of ongoing planning and review. At the start of a year, goals are identified for sites, individual teachers, departments and, in detail, for students. These goals are revisited throughout the year and responses are made when, for example, progress data indicates specific pockets of underachievement.

Strategic goals are identified by school-wide consultation and surveys. Parent and student opinions are noted at all stages. Thus, in September, the school starts the year with clear targets. Each year one major goal is identified for each of eight areas of school life, from college initiative to attendance, from social work to technology. Each goal has a lead member of staff. Goals are reviewed quarterly. The management team regularly reviews the overall action plan. There are many occasions when amendments have been made to adjust a goal or, for example, enhance support in a particular area of work on the basis of poor progress.

The school has a gifted and hardworking management team, made up of directors from each site. This ensures that monitoring and procedures are consistent across all four sites. The good collaboration and communication that exists ensures that action is always prompt and consistent across the whole school. The principal and the whole school community are clearly committed to the future direction of the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Satellite Academy 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 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