



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Manhattan School of Career Development**

**High School 751  
113 East 4 Street  
New York  
NY 10003**

**Principal: Tobias Weissman**

**Dates of review: May 15 - 16, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Ronnie Young**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Manhattan School for Career Development is a high school with 262 students from age 14 through 21. Students are non-graded. The school population comprises 53.8% Black, 41% Hispanic, 3.7% White, 1% Asian students and 0.5% students of other ethnicities. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 73% of the students enrolled and girls account for 27%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 62%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 90% eligibility.

Manhattan School for Career Development is a special education school, serving students with moderate to severe learning and emotional disabilities. All students follow New York State Alternate Assessment programs. It is the only special education high school, which offers shared instructional opportunities. Students may be enrolled in this school and a proprietary school, which confers a New York State Education Department validated trade school diploma. This adds significant value to the student's existing individual education plan diploma. Nineteen students are presently on these programs in culinary arts training or building maintenance.

The school has 10 worksites across the City for students in their fourth year at the school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The whole school community, led by an inspirational principal, is totally committed to the success and wellbeing of every individual student.
- All staff have an extremely detailed knowledge of the performance of every student, facilitated by specially devised assessments and skill profiles.
- All staff work in a highly collaborative way to set goals with students and help students to achieve them.
- Exceptional differentiation in every class allows all students to work in groups or individually, at their own level and in their optimum learning style.
- The school fully differentiates all professional development based on very frequent observations by members of the administration.
- The school has developed routine and well-established intervisitation along with visits to and from other schools, helping to share good practice.
- Related services staff work as partners with teachers to raise achievement and self-esteem in students and assist in their personal development,
- The school's targets its very broad curriculum totally to student need, based on vocational skills while integrating alternative assessment components.
- The excellent transition program places students in worksites where they learn skills to prepare them for life after school.
- The school works in an extremely flexible way, revising and amending plans and strategies whenever necessary.

### What the school needs to improve

- Compare ethnicity and gender data to identify possible trends in the light of cultural attitudes to disability and roles.
- Find ways of making comparisons of performance and progress with other schools.
- Explore new methods of improving attendance

## 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 Manhattan School for Career Development is a unique school, led by an inspirational principal who, along with his staff, is totally committed to the success and well-being of every individual student. The students, who present with a variety of learning and emotional difficulties, usually join the school with poor attitudes towards learning based on poor experiences. The staff members work hard to eradicate this disaffection. The emphasis is on raising self-esteem by designing a curriculum that engages students. It also helps them to achieve results in a happy school that exudes optimism and positivism. The vocational emphasis motivates students to learn new skills and clever integration of functional skills helps them to succeed in alternative assessments. Staff have clear and detailed knowledge of the skills and achievement of every student, thanks to relentless commitment to data collection and analysis. Teachers are quick to revise plans and strategies in line with new data and respond well to changes that become evident in classes. This results in personalized programs and differentiated classes, designed around students' individual needs.

Towards the end of their time in school, students look forward to real work experience at a number of worksites across the city, where they work full-time and learn skills that can help them to gain employment. All staff, including related services providers, collaborate fully both inside and outside classrooms. The school regards parents as partners in their children's education, so students can continue to learn outside the classroom.

Differentiation and teamwork is evident in dealing with the staff's learning needs. The school fully differentiates professional development, facilitated by close and frequent observation by the administration and has well-established intervention helping to share good practice. The school does not compare its data by ethnicity or gender, however, and cannot find similar schools for comparison. Although it is increasing attendance slowly with ongoing innovative strategies, attendance remains comparatively low.

The inquiry team is working well and is studying 15 students to ascertain their expressive auditory language to reinforce it in the workplace. Since the last Quality Review, newsletters and parents' workshops have improved communication with parents and students work with staff in setting achievement goals. The school has established routine differentiation in all classes and the integration of functional skills and alternate assessment subjects into the vocational curriculum have increased participation. A specially designed form has facilitated conferencing with students in English language arts and math so students have a greater say in their learning.

## **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.**

Teachers, administration and related services providers constantly gather information and data on students. This gives the staff a clear and very detailed snapshot of every student at any given time. As well as data on academic performance and progress, staff record levels of behavior, social skills and attendance. A wide array of formal assessments are used to measure academic, social and communication development including Brigance, the New York State Alternative Assessment and testing in the Wilson and Ramp Up intervention programs. In addition, the school has devised graded skills checklists for all vocational workshops. Staff then profile students against these to get accurate information on individual need.

Because of its relevance to the school population, the school keeps detailed records on behavior. It has developed robust systems and provides good professional development to enable staff to use data effectively. Staff use ARIS, Acuity and Scantron routinely and the results are the basis of all lesson planning, instruction and academic intervention. The data manager uses all information, including the skills profiles, to program individual students into appropriate groups. She and the administration carry out ongoing professional development and give support, both formally and informally. Although the school records ethnicity and gender it does not currently use it to compare student performance. However, the school has acknowledged the perceived need for female-orientated vocational skills and has added childcare and housekeeping to its curriculum. The school's uniqueness makes complete comparison with other schools difficult, although it does compare itself with other special education high schools.

**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.**

All staff at the school work exceptionally collaboratively to set goals for and with students and help them to achieve. The staff have common preparation times and work together whenever possible throughout the day to set and monitor specific goals for students, many of which are interdisciplinary. Each student has a completely individual program. The school has designed this so that each student can achieve their identified needs and aspirations. Assistant principals carefully co-ordinate and monitor programs to ensure continuity. They quickly identify the students in greatest need of improvement and the school offers a range of personalized intervention. The staff and administration have very high expectations of students and this leads students to have higher expectations. When they first enter the school, many have poor learning backgrounds and are disaffected. However, the school's innovative curriculum and individual attention motivates them to believe they can be successful and this leads to successful learning outcomes. The school conveys these expectations regularly to parents. This

leads to greater involvement of a growing number of parents who are excited by their children's progress. There are very good relationships between parents and the school. Teachers, counselors and administrators are in regular, sometimes daily, contact by telephone, emails and personal visits to report on student goals, progress, and achievement or emotional upsets. The school regularly invites parents to provide information about learning needs and home circumstances and many do. This partnership enables the school to adapt and reinforce its strategies.

**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 has devised a diverse and stimulating curriculum, which integrates vocational focus with the demands of alternative assessment. During the first three years at the school, students attend two vocational shops per day on a roll-over system. These include culinary arts, clerical work, photography, and bike shop. The school teaches the core curriculum alongside these shops and functional skills are fully integrated. Students in the bike shop learn how to fix tires to wheel rims and practice the geometry of a circle by measuring circumference, radius and diameter. The students learn geography skills by following cycle maps of the city. Every shop has a word wall with subject-specific vocabulary to support English language arts as well as vocational skills. Visual and performing arts are part of the curriculum. The school integrates art into other subjects and the band and chorus provide opportunities for music after school. This fosters students' creative abilities and students have decorated all the school walls. Students are enthusiastic about the school's full program of sporting activities.

The vocational theme continues in the students' fourth year, when they go to one of the school's worksites. These include 69th Armory where students have a maintenance program. They have renovated a great deal of the building under the supervision of a teacher and paraprofessionals. Other sites include Goodwill Shops where they learn retailing skills and New York University where they assist in the catering facility. This vocational focus has resulted in 82% of graduating students placed in employment in 2007. The school successfully differentiates all lessons and shops according to the needs and aspirations of the students. They work individually or in groups to learn skills and achieve competences. Teamwork is prioritized which helps their social skills and behavior. As one teacher said, "We construct lessons around the student and their needs". The school is working very hard to improve attendance and new strategies and home visits by staff have increased statistics by 3% this year. However, the relatively low attendance is due to social reasons the school cannot control. This is an ongoing priority for the school.

**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 outstanding**

The principal and assistant principals spend most of each day closely observing classes, conducting walk-throughs and giving feedback to teachers. This results in completely

individualized professional development and strategies for teachers to improve their instruction and classroom relationships. They always receive written feedback with clear recommendations that focus on actions needed to improve instruction, carefully monitored in subsequent observations. Intervisitation of classes is routine and well established. One teacher said, "It is second nature here". When possible, staff work together across the curriculum. For example, staff from culinary arts, print shop and clerical skills work together to teach students to produce menus. Staff members visit other schools whenever they can and every Tuesday, staff from other schools visit to share good practice. The school has many excellent partnerships with outside bodies, including the work sites and the local community, who now work in partnership with the school on a number of local projects.

The school runs very smoothly. Roles and responsibilities are clear and policies and procedures followed consistently. Student behavior is consistently very good. The introduction of Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support, which works on a points system, has proved very successful, both at reducing inappropriate behavior and at motivating students into positive behaviors. Related service providers are part of every team and work alongside teachers in the classroom. Students have individualized counseling plans, which often include home visits by related services staff. Counselors and therapists work with teachers and students on work preparation, individualized careers advice, resume building and interview skills. One teacher said, "It is a seamless process. We all know the social and emotional behaviors of every child. Everyone in the building is a counselor – we are the student's school family".

**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 staff are experts and highly successful at using regular periodic assessments and diagnostic tools systematically to measure student progress and achievement and the effectiveness of interventions. They are quick to change plans and practice to meet the ever-changing needs of individual students. The principal said "We're the last stop and have to have lots of ways to get them out of the fix they're in – there's nothing under the sun we haven't and won't try". This underpinning philosophy has led to reflective and systematic planning and monitoring to improve students' achievement and their employment prospects. Differentiated goals for all teaching staff have led to focused and highly effective professional development. All school and individual plans are time-framed and measurable. They have detailed action plans showing performance indicators which the school displays over many of the walls in the building. The school monitors these regularly and revises its planned strategies if it finds the performance indicators to be unrealistic.

Each outcome of goal setting is the foundation for new improvements and future planning. This has helped the school to fulfill its vision, which is "to increase students' self-esteem and personal growth to enable them to achieve viable employment". The principal provides inspirational leadership and, together with his staff, is totally committed to the success and well-being of every individual student.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Manhattan School For Career Development</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.**

<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .</b>	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.**

<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .</b>	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	
<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.**

<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	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		
<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?					<b>X</b>
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				<b>X</b>	
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?					<b>X</b>
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				<b>X</b>	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					<b>X</b>
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?					<b>X</b>
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					<b>X</b>
<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?				<b>X</b>	
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?				<b>X</b>	
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?				<b>X</b>	
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?				<b>X</b>	
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?				<b>X</b>	
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?				<b>X</b>	
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?				<b>X</b>	
<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>