



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Stephen A. Halsey School

Middle School 157

**63 - 55 102nd Street,
Queens
New York 11374**

Principal: Vincent Suraci

Dates of review: October 12 - 15, 2007

Reviewer: Ronnie Young

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Stephen A. Halsey is a junior high school with 1036 students from grade 6 through grade 9. The school population comprises 13.5% Black, 19.8% Hispanic, 40.8% White and 25% Asian students with 0.9% students of other ethnicities. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 is 93.7%. The school receives Title 1 funding for 47% students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Data is collected, analyzed and used extensively and routinely throughout the school and drives all activity for individual students, groups of interest and the whole school.
- Differentiation, based on data, is the norm in all classrooms and with all teaching staff.
- There is strong leadership from the principal and his cabinet, who are continuing to effect change.
- The cabinet, faculty and principal have an excellent knowledge of all students, which facilitates personal as well as academic support.
- All students are polite, courteous and respectful to staff and each other and show enthusiasm for and enjoyment of learning.
- The collaborative culture in the school facilitates staff working together to raise achievement for groups and individual students..
- Goal setting is embedded in all school activity, with timeframes and measurable targets.
- There is a broad curriculum with an emphasis on the arts, and every student from grade 7 on learns a foreign language.
- Managers, faculty, students and parents have very high expectations of themselves and each other.
- Professional development decisions are made strategically, based on data.

What the school needs to improve

- Involve students more in goal setting, so they can be better able to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Make even greater efforts to involve all parents, for example, through community-based organizations.

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.

Stephen J. Halsey School has worked hard to increase the achievement of its students by using data to individualize their learning. All members of staff have an extensive knowledge of their students' performance and progress from external and internal data, using initial diagnostic assessments as a baseline and measuring progress from there. The school is justly proud of its collaborative culture, and most parents are very active in the business of the school, although a minority takes little part. Goal setting is regularly carried out for the whole school, for teachers and for students, although the students themselves play little part in the goal setting, other than to achieve the goals set for them.

The school has a wide, engaging curriculum which includes the arts and which broadens each student's experience. Differentiation is widespread and facilitated by the in-depth knowledge the teachers have of their students. This has led to better targeting of academic intervention and greater challenge for all students. There is excellent rapport across all sections of the school community, which, with strong leadership from the principal and cabinet, has helped to make rapid and effective change in the school.

The school's areas for improvement in last year's report have all been addressed. Data is now used comprehensively to inform instruction. Interim and end-of year performance goals for individual students and groups are in place, and the whole school community now has representation on those teams which dictate the direction of the school, such as a parent on the Inquiry Team. The Inquiry Team is focusing on a group of 22 students for whom English is not their first language but who are no longer English language learners, but whose scores are dipping in all subjects.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

All staff in the school have an excellent knowledge of the performance and progress of individual students and groups of students in the school. Firstly, the school has developed its own data base of test data which is disseminated to all teaching staff and is broken down by individual, grade and class, by ethnicity and gender, and also by groups of interest such as English language learners and special education students. Year on year data is included for cohorts and individuals and the school always evaluates itself against its peer schools and those citywide.

This is supplemented by each teacher's assessment notebook, which contains the relevant data listed above, plus that collected by monitoring, conferencing with and evaluating student performance and progress day-to-day. This builds up a picture of each student's strengths and weaknesses and how they learn. Students' interests and home circumstances are also included to inform the design of lessons and appropriate learning material so they are relevant for students. The notebook is further used to evaluate strategies used in the classroom and to what extent they are successful for each student. Each student also has a work-in-progress folder so teachers can assess at what stage each student is in relation to the rest of the class and the pacing calendar.

Progress is measured by administering baseline assessments at the beginning of the year, which are broken down into components, and then recording levels of achievement for individual students. These levels of achievement are tracked across subjects to look for patterns in learning. This helps teachers to design work on an individual and group basis so areas of weakness can be targeted. The school tracks special education and English language learners very closely so they can move from self-contained to inclusive classes as soon as they are ready to do so. The school carries out extensive professional development on data use and staff feel comfortable and confident collecting, analyzing and using it.

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 is used extremely effectively throughout the school. Teachers have at least one period per week for collaboration as a grade team or as a class teaching team. Subject meetings take place monthly. The main focus of these meetings is to understand each class, grade and student's specific strengths and weaknesses and to adjust curriculum planning and pacing accordingly. Whenever appropriate, parent volunteers and guidance counselors join these team meetings.

Members of the school community have very high expectations of themselves and of each other. Students have good knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses and have individual goals to improve their performance and progress. These tend to be set for and with them by teachers, however, rather than by the students themselves, so whilst they know what they are aiming for, they are less certain of how to achieve it. Students are enthusiastic about how well teachers know them and appreciate the individual instruction offered to them at lunchtime and after school. Teachers regularly inform parents about the performance and progress of their children by email, as well as in routine parent/teacher meetings, and see parents as partners in their children's education. Parents are encouraged to come into and contact the school at any time to give information about their children and their needs, but a minority of parents take little part in their children's learning. The school is currently looking at new ways of including all parents.

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 outstanding.

The school differentiates work extremely well. In all classes, a workshop model is used, with whole-group instruction but with group, pair and individual work differentiated by ability, task or method. This is based on data in each teacher’s assessment notebook and on knowledge of each student’s strengths and weaknesses. This information helps to make up groups, which are appropriate to the task. For example, in a grade 9 math class, students, grouped according to achievement level, worked on different equation problems showing their work on overhead transparencies which were then shown to the rest of the class. The class then criticized the method of problem solving but not the right or wrong answer. This exercise challenged all students at their appropriate level.

The curriculum itself is broad and engaging. As well as the core curriculum, which is chosen to facilitate and provide meaningful data about students, each student studies a talent, which may be artistic, musical or computing. Students choose their talent according to their interests. An extensive after-school enrichment program gives students the opportunity to study their chosen talent further or to take part in something else. This will facilitate entry to a specialized high school if appropriate. Each student chooses one of two foreign languages from grade 7 upwards. Students are enthusiastic about the range of activities which includes chorus, orchestra, and drama.

All budgeting and scheduling decisions are based on available data and the goals of the school. All resources align with the common goals of the school. For example, each teacher has a professional development folder on differentiation to aid their own practice. Scheduling has been designed so there are 90 minute blocks of learning which allow students to spend more time on task. Wherever possible, class groups are formed then matched up to specific teachers to facilitate best matches in styles of teaching and learning.

There is a high level of emotional rapport in the school, which echoes the collaborative culture set by the principal. Students are respectful and well behaved and show enthusiasm for and enjoyment of learning. Expectations are very clear and systems and procedures are consistently reinforced. The discipline code is understood and adhered to by all and procedures for attendance include a daily phone call home for absentees. Strategies to encourage attendance include students with 100% attendance receiving rewards.

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

There is very good professional development across the school, based on data, institutional needs and the principal’s vision. Regular teacher surveys help to differentiate development for each teacher and much of the training is in-house, delivered by expert practitioners on the staff. The school also makes use of peer support and resource pooling with other schools in the network. External training is encouraged if it is valid and valuable to the school. Induction for new teachers is effective and includes a

developmental teacher from the subject area and a buddy from the grade. The assistant principals give individual help and support and experienced teachers help to model lessons.

The principal and administration have very good knowledge of teaching staff by daily observations and walkthroughs which are almost always accompanied by written or verbal feedback. These conversations with teachers provide important information that helps the leadership to differentiate instruction, and help professional development to be differentiated for the teaching staff. Intervisitation of teachers' classes is encouraged. Teachers feel comfortable learning from each other and they always try to see as many other classes as they can and give feedback to those they have observed. Weekly team and departmental meetings also provide opportunities for informal professional development.

Youth and personal development for students is very good. Guidance counseling is effective and the counselors are included in meetings concerning students whenever possible. The school provides community service in nursing homes and the feeder elementary schools and students are given the opportunity to develop their own personal development skills by serving on the student council or taking part in peer conflict resolution sessions. The school has a number of partnerships with outside organizations such as Midori and Friends, which provide cultural activities, musicians from Broadway shows who contribute to drama and musical activity and Forest Hills Community House, which provides tutoring for students in community centers.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed

The school's constant drive for improvement has led to close monitoring of goals for the school as a whole, for teachers and for students. A diagnostic assessment is carried out on all school goals at the end of each term, and evaluated with reference to feedback from data and teachers to ascertain progress and see if revision of the goal needs to be carried out. There are plans to give shorter timeframes for interim goal setting but this is not yet in place.

Planning for teachers' goals is linked to student performance and progress. As far as possible, they are consistent within and across all departments, for example, using data to inform instruction is a school-wide practice. Systems are currently being set up to break teacher outcomes into smaller steps. Teachers negotiate their targets with their supervisors and these are monitored on an ongoing basis, but they are not always measurable. Teachers themselves revise their goals for students on a daily basis, but students are not always aware of this. Teachers work with a template lesson plan, which includes evaluation, and next steps to address objectives not met or to build on those that are met. Goals are measurable where they are long-term, but not always in a shorter time frame.

All members of the school community have a clear vision for the school, which is to address students' individual needs in order for them to make yearly progress and to facilitate overall professional development outcomes and differentiation of instruction. All activity in the school is aimed at using data to make these things happen.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Stephen A. Halsey Junior High School (K157)	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