



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Newcomers High School**

**High School 555**

**28- 01 41st Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11101**

**Principal: Mary Burke**

**Dates of review: March 3 - 4, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Ann Berger**

## Content of the report

### **Part 1: The School Context**

Information about the school

### **Part 2: Overview**

What the school does well  
What the school needs to improve

### **Part 3: Main Findings**

Progress made since the last review  
Overall evaluation  
How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

### **Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Newcomers High School is a high school with 1038 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 1.8% Black, 59.5% Hispanic, 7.3% White, and 32.57% Asian students. The student body includes 100% English language learners and no 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 was 92.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73% eligibility.

The school was established to offer newly arrived immigrant students a rigorous academic program alongside opportunities to accelerate the acquisition of English. Bilingual programs are offered in Chinese and Spanish and translators are available in nearly all other languages, whenever necessary. The students speak 37 different languages. New students are admitted daily and all students are admitted “over-the-counter”. Most speak no English on arrival. The school is exempt from admitting special education students.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- All members of staff have instant access to all the data they need to promote high achievement and to get students off to a flying start.
- The schools' initial assessments are used in an exemplary way to inform the programs offered, the placement of students and the way they are taught.
- The commitment of the school to find each student's passion has resulted in a particularly motivating curriculum.
- Outstanding mentoring, guidance and the involvement of parents secure exceptionally good academic and personal student progress.
- Teachers have an outstanding knowledge of the performance of each individual that results in excellent differentiation in lessons.
- Special attention is paid to the development of English through a very wide range of additional programs.
- Every new innovation is begun with the same thorough and consistent approach to analyzing the evidence.
- The leadership involves the whole community in a detailed way in the evaluation of its work and setting goals for the future.
- The school has developed innovative ways to compare the progress of English language learners with others across the City.
- Intervisitations are very well planned to ensure that they target the identified areas of development for each individual teacher.

### What the school needs to improve

- Record the finer details that students learn in each lesson to refine teaching and learning strategies.
- Build on the successful work with English language learners to further reduce drop out rates.

## 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 outstanding.**

This school is rightly proud of its particularly high graduation rates, as these are about double the average rates for English language learners in the City. This is the outcome of the very strong evidence-based practice that permeates all levels of the school. Rigorous attention is paid to the acquisition of English alongside ensuring that no student falls behind in their other studies through outstanding bilingual teaching in Chinese and Spanish. The teaching is particularly well targeted to the needs of individuals, both through creative programming and superbly well-differentiated lessons. Enormous care is taken to ensure that both language and content are a focus in every lesson. As one student told us, "Teaching is so logical and easy to understand". The school is used as a model of excellent practice in the teaching of English language learners for many other schools within and beyond New York City.

The principal and cabinet are determined to engage all learners by identifying their talents and ensuring they can be pursued. This has been done by offering an outstandingly broad range of curricular opportunities during the school day, after school, on Saturdays and through internships, scholarships, community service, the arts and business enterprise. One teacher commented, "It is a place of action here." Everyone works tirelessly to ensure the right opportunities are provided for each individual so that they are motivated to graduate and pursue their interests. Parents make a very strong contribution to the learning in the school. The monthly parent meetings, where the State standards and goals for the students are explained and discussed in detail are exceptionally well attended. As a parent said, "It is like the United Nations here and our views are valued as if it is." Parents are fully involved in evaluating the annual plan and the school's progress towards its annual goals.

The inquiry team shows the same rigor as is displayed in all aspects of the schools work. The lead teacher said, "I view this as an experiment so that we can see the students with fresh eyes." This scientific approach has resulted in an excellent analysis of why some students are struggling with acquiring English. Innovative approaches are being devised to meet their needs. Although the recording of student progress in acquiring English is well developed, the small steps could be better noted so that teachers can further differentiate their questioning in lessons.

The school has addressed the issues raised by the last Quality Review extremely effectively. Ongoing investment in technology has enhanced the learning for students taking virtual business programs. Teachers now have additional planning time that is used to great effect to discuss differentiation. Further work has been done to individualize instruction and support and this work is exemplary.

## **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.**

This school is always seeking to improve its understanding of the progress of students through a thorough analysis of its data. Data is disaggregated by gender, language, and literacy in native languages, ethnicity, and 'at risk' groupings. Everything the school does begins with an understanding of both the qualitative data and the contextual information about the needs of students. When the information points to weaknesses in particular classes or with certain teachers, very good professional development opportunities are identified to ensure rapid improvements are made. There are no similar schools against which their performance can be directly compared so the school has developed its own detailed analysis of its performance compared to that of other English language learners across the City. Even though the school's performance is outstanding in this regard, even more challenging goals have been set to outperform the other schools. Teachers are very confident in the gathering and use of data. Information is easily accessed and used, school generated assessments are regularly employed to gather ongoing data, and grade groups meet regularly to track progress and observe trends in performance. Teachers are provided with very good information about the progress of their students, alongside information about any difficulties or specific needs they may have. They use it extremely well to adjust their classroom practice. Special workshops have been provided to assist teachers in understanding what they need to know in order to differentiate their practice and, as a result, an even wider range of data sets have been requested and developed.

**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 outstanding.**

Goal setting drives the performance of students, teachers and the school as a whole. At whole school level there is exceptional participation from the whole community in looking at the progress made from year to year, the trends over time and the improvements over the year in question. Parents, as well as teachers and other members of the school leadership team visit classrooms systematically against an agreed focus. This evidence is viewed, alongside other data, to determine goals for the subsequent year which are challenging and focused on further raising achievement. Those identified at orientation with literacy difficulties in their own language receive extensive additional teaching in smaller groups to ensure they catch up. Within these programs interim goals are set to break the learning down into manageable steps. At an individual student level, goals are also set following detailed assessment on arrival at the school. They talk knowledgeably about their individual goals and know what they must do to improve. Innovative placement tests have been devised to ensure that the students can show what they can do in their native language. The orientation program, which lasts three days, ensures that no time is lost and work is immediately focused on ensuring they learn English quickly and can progress with their other studies at the same time. This is

a key reason for the very high graduation rates. All staff have been involved in developing action plans with challenging goals. These are used to hold teachers to account for their work and the progress of individuals and groups of students. Parents are provided with detailed information in many languages about the standards the students have to meet at each level and information about how their own children are doing in relation to these standards. Students have such a good understanding of the importance of goals that they have embedded it themselves into their own business enterprise scheme. Expectations are very high. Where students are failing to meet expectations they are assigned a mentor who monitors their work and ensures their classes motivate them. Very high graduation rates are achieved for these struggling students because the school analyzes their progress systematically and gives them clear and supportive feedback about what they need to do to improve. As a result drop out rates are very low in comparison to English language learners citywide.

**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.**

This school ensures that everyone can follow their passions and interests while at the same time making sure that all the mandatory elements are met to secure the best graduation rates. The school rigorously uses data to drive scheduling, the use of resources and choice of support programs to ensure that all students make the best progress they can. There is an exceptional range of programs that take the needs of every individual into account, from intensive language and literacy support to ethics and moral studies. This complex activity is undertaken using the data about student progress alongside the information they provide about their interests and areas for development. The students commented on the particularly successful range of advanced placement courses as well as those for students who are finding the acquisition of English more challenging. A great emphasis is placed on enabling students to find their talents and interests. For example, a teacher helped a particular student enter the National Geographic Photography Awards program. He was successful in winning this prestigious prize. His parent commented, “My son lives for photography and will be successful thanks to this school and the opportunity he was afforded here.” All lessons are planned carefully to include scaffolding of language as well as a range of opportunities for paired and collaborative work. Teachers use questioning skills adeptly to establish exactly what each individual knows and future lessons use this information to ensure that the work planned meets the full achievement range in the class. This is also well developed in literacy lessons for those at the very early stages of English. However, the finer detail of what the students learn, lesson by lesson, are not always fully recorded to help refine the teaching strategies lesson by lesson. The cabinet expects all lessons to be interesting and motivating and data is also evaluated in relation to participation rates in class to ensure this is the norm.

The students are confident that they receive a good education at their school and that it is a better school than all the others. They feel empowered to make good choices. This is the result of an excellent program for conflict resolution. Students learn to talk with each other, to make compromises and come to agreed resolutions. The school works to promote understanding and respect for diversity on every level. This encourages skills for life and an environment for learning exemplified by the high levels of care, mutual

respect and professional accountability. Levels of attendance are high and students and staff enjoy coming to 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 school has a fail-safe system for ensuring that professional development is focused to raise standards. The teachers complete a biannual survey which is laid alongside the information from lesson observations and examination results. Identified needs are then prioritized in line with the school goals. The proportion of outstanding teaching observed during the review was very high which suggests this work has been to very good effect. An innovative system has been devised to ensure that specific teachers can visit lessons where instructional techniques are being used that fall into their own areas for development. There is a spirit of open debate alongside rigorous evaluation of teaching that ensures that even the newest teachers perform at a high standard swiftly. Extremely effective organizational procedures and structures support the journey towards successful outcomes and provide clear boundaries for students. The guidance work is very well integrated into the overall work of the school. Data is analyzed to identify students who may be facing personal issues and extensive work is undertaken to ensure they remain on track and problems are addressed. The many and complex difficulties faced by these students at home are regarded as within the scope of the school to help resolve. They involve many other agencies and as a result most students are successful. Excellent links with a range of partners promote students' academic, personal and social development. The exceptional guidance team ensure that nearly all students attend college after graduating.

**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 outstanding.**

The Comprehensive Education Plan contains detailed goals. What stands out is the way this school evaluates their plan. It is a multi-layered process involving parents, students and teachers. The evaluation is rigorous and includes progress data as well as a series of observations and classroom visits conducted by the school leadership and elected groups of parents. Actions are the result of careful consideration of past successes and failures, regular and rigorous monitoring of the current status and consideration of what is best for students. The cabinet works to make full use of teacher assessments to measure ongoing progress and amend whole school action plans to meet redefined goals. Where weaknesses are found the direction is changed. Nothing is left to chance and all initiatives are carefully piloted before being adopted at whole school level. Teachers are skilful in using assessments to change plans for student learning immediately should there be a need to do so. During grade and common planning meetings, teachers measure the effectiveness of programs and instruction against the progress made by individuals and groups of students in learning particular knowledge or in developing a targeted skill or concept. This ensures good progress for all students. Everyone at the school works in total collaboration to create, implement and realize the exemplary vision for success.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Newcomers High School</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.

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?* N/A					
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.

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
<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.

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
<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?					<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>

\* This school does not have any students with special education needs.