



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Metropolitan High School

High School 248

1121 Intervale Avenue

Bronx

NY 10459

Principal: Carla Theodorou

Dates of review: February 13 - 14, 2008

Lead Reviewer: David Glick

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Metropolitan High School is a high school with 308 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 35% Black, 63.% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 81.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 82.7% eligibility.

The school is in its third year of operation. It started by serving only ninth grade students and has added a grade level each year. The school's first graduating class will be in 2009. The school is housed in trailers in a parking lot while the City renovates a building for it. The school anticipates moving into the new premises in 2009.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers carefully monitor individual student performance and communicate progress to students and parents.
- The principal creates an open, collegial environment for the staff.
- The school manages the budget creatively to focus on student needs.
- The principal communicates a clear vision of college preparation to staff, students and parents.
- The school engages in continuous self-analysis for the benefit of school goals and students.
- All staff members consistently communicate high academic and behavioral expectations to students and families.
- The school creates community partnerships to provide additional support and learning opportunities to all students.
- Teachers support the school goals by masterfully weaving character education and study skills into content lessons.
- The school effectively supports its special education students and English language learners.

What the school needs to improve

- Analyze performance data by gender and ethnic group to identify and respond to learning trends.
- Clarify whole-school goals with measurable success criteria.
- Develop a strategic approach to professional development that ensures that both individual and whole school needs are met.
- Enhance the curriculum to increase the range of subjects and advance learning opportunities.

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 school is in its third year of operation. Although small, it is expanding rapidly due to the addition of an additional grade level each year. As it grows, the school is establishing efficient policies and systems. Although testing practices have changed each year, the school has effectively implemented a data management system, which is accessible and easy to operate. Teachers use the system regularly and parents depend on it for continuous updates on their children's progress. However, the school does not analyze all of the data in enough depth to enable it to identify differences in performance between boys and girls, or different ethnic groups. While the school makes the most of its links with community partnerships, the curriculum is not yet broad enough and students lack opportunities for arts-based activities and for advanced placement courses.

The school's last review took place in May 2006 before the school had finished its first year. The principal has made many improvements since then while staying true to the school's vision. The principal hires and retains staff dedicated to the school and its students and sets suitable goals for improvement which she shares with staff. However, the school lacks clearly defined success criteria against which it can judge its progress.

The school focuses powerfully on preparing students for college, for example by including character education and study skills in content lessons. Parents and students all understand the principal's vision. They generally accept the strict discipline procedures and dress code that is part of the school culture. Nevertheless, the level of absence is higher than the school would wish.

The inquiry team recently focused on a group of 16 English language learners in grades 9 and 10. The team analyzed each student's scholarship report and classroom data. As a result, they identified weaknesses in core subjects. Based on data and research regarding English language learners, the team implemented six interventions. Teachers found that these interventions were effective with all students.

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

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school makes good use of computer software to maintain comprehensive records on all students. All teachers consistently update student performance data. Parents and students check this data frequently to monitor progress. Teachers generate written

progress reports for parents every two weeks. The school seamlessly includes special education students and English language learners in these processes.

The school tracks the progress of individuals very well, but does not yet analyze the data to track performance by gender and ethnic groups to identify and respond to trends. The school also recognizes that it does not make a sufficiently detailed comparison of its performance with other schools in its peer group. The relative newness of the school and changing testing practices limit its ability to examine trends over multiple years. However, the principal anticipates performing these analyses as the school matures.

The school trains all teachers to use the software and enforces the expectation to use it effectively. Teachers also use additional data tools. For example, the English department analyzed test data to correlate passing rates on the English language arts Regents' tests to other test scores. Teachers are comfortable with this type of analysis because they have been trained effectively to use the software.

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.

Bi-weekly written progress reports keep parents well informed and focus all families and students on academic progress. Teachers track all student work, credits and progress on Regents' exams. Each student knows his or her level of achievement at any point in time. Students use the progress reports to set interim goals to prepare for Regents' exams. The school invites parents to provide any information and support that will help their children achieve the goal of college preparation.

The principal consistently communicates her clear goals for the school's students to the school community. Teachers, students and parents all articulate the high academic and behavioral standards that the school has established. The school requires more credits than most high schools as a way to ensure that students get more than the minimum necessary for college admissions. The school strives to have all students achieve a Regents' diploma. For students who have not passed enough Regents' exams by grade 11, the school requires an extra class period for additional instruction.

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 performs item analyses on test data to determine students' areas of greatest need. These analyses are used to identify targeted instructional techniques to differentiate instruction. The school uses what it learns from specific examples to address instructional issues in the whole school. For example, teachers identified the need for additional visual tools to target instruction for English language learners. The school expanded these techniques to increase the performance of all students. Teachers update curriculum maps regularly to respond to changing student needs.

Teachers frequently include study tips in lessons and select literature and activities that are relevant to students' lives, often including character education components. For

example, English teachers reviewed books designed to help students understand the culture of college life.

The school establishes clear attendance goals. Incentives such as merit points and periodic pizza parties help the school make progress toward those goals. However, attendance and tardiness problems persist, and the school is continuing to work with both students and parents. The principal has recognized that its curriculum does not give students enough opportunities in the arts and music and that it lacks advanced placement courses to encourage and motivate students.

The school focuses its budget carefully on the needs of the students and the school goals. For example, the school has adjusted staffing levels to provide double math and double English language arts instruction. The school also maintains smaller class sizes than average. The capacity of the trailers in which the school is housed does not support the class size for which the City budgets. The school therefore funds smaller classes with the benefit of additional support for students.

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.

Teachers have many opportunities for professional development and appreciate being given discretion to choose their own professional development to ensure relevance. However, these choices are not always based on clear strategies or data. The school maintains an open, collaborative environment throughout the year. Teachers visit each other's classrooms frequently to learn from each other.

The school creatively combines an orientation program for new students with an induction program for teachers new to the school. The orientation establishes a common philosophy for learning among students and teachers. The orientation also provides a forum for establishing high expectations for both teachers and students.

Although the principal does not visit classrooms as often as some teachers would like, she keeps herself informed of each teacher's strengths and areas for improvement. She responds effectively to any teacher challenges with a firm and respectful approach that combines professional development with clarity of expectations. The principal makes it clear that the school wants only teachers who do believe that the school's students can learn at high levels.

Partnerships with several community organizations are used creatively for a wide variety of purposes. The Bronx Arts Ensemble enhances curriculum in the arts and music. College Now provides opportunities for Saturday classes at Bronx Community College. Other organizations provide tutoring opportunities, community service opportunities and college advisory resources.

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.

In addition to classroom data, the school uses data from a variety of tests to monitor and set goals for student progress. Teachers use this data across subject areas. For example, social studies teachers use data to recognize the impact of reading ability on student performance in social studies classes. They responded by working with English teachers to better understand reading and writing across the curriculum. The school does not identify clear interim goals with specific success criteria for students and teachers.

An annual retreat in August provides extended opportunities for collaborative planning. The administration and teachers use this time to clarify the school's vision and create plans to achieve that vision in the coming year.

The school adopts a no-excuses approach with teachers and students who develop a deeply held belief that all students can achieve the goal of college admission. The school structures its schedule, curriculum and behavior policies in accordance with that belief. For example, the double periods in math and English language arts for all students emphasize the basic skills and study habits necessary for student success.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Metropolitan High School	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 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

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped