



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

School Of Community Research and Learning

**High School 540
1980 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: William Mulqueen

Dates of review: November 13 - 14, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Bruce Berry

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School for Community Research and Learning is a high school with 395 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 49% Black, 48% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 11.6% English language learners and 21.2% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 80.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 81.2% eligibility.

The school opened in 2003 and had its first graduating students in 2007. It is located on the Stevenson Campus and shares the building with five other schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's good leadership is driving the vision of continually improving student achievement.
- The principal, assistant principals and teachers work effectively in teams to plan curriculum, instruction and interventions to support student learning.
- The school has excellent data systems for periodically tracking the progress of students' achievements.
- Students in greatest need of improvement receive valuable support from the teachers and other staff and make good progress in their achievement levels.
- There are good communication systems, which engage parents as partners in their children's education.
- The high expectations of teachers, students and parents are in evidence in all aspects of the work of the school.
- Parents are very positive about the high level of care and support their children receive from the school.
- There are good procedures in place, which lead to the school having a calm and caring culture.
- Good partnership arrangements are providing excellent support for students' academic and social achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the marking policy to ensure there is a consistent approach to the periodic assessment of students' progress across the curriculum.
- Continue to develop the differentiation of instruction and activities to provide consistency in addressing students' individual learning needs.
- Further improve the monitoring of teacher outcomes to ensure the consistency of the impact on student achievements in classrooms.
- Improve the use of the school's data systems to analyze periodically the progress of students' achievement by ethnic and gender groupings.
- Further develop goal setting for improving achievement by negotiating challenging and differentiated goals for classrooms, grades and subjects.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Since the last Quality Review, the school has made good progress in data management, in collaborative planning and in the integration of literacy strategies into all subjects. There is less progress in the use of differentiated instruction to meet the individual learning needs of students. The principal's good leadership is providing the impetus and drive for continually improving student achievement. The school has developed excellent data systems for monitoring the progress made by students in their achievement levels. The teachers work well together to plan curriculum and instructional activities. The students have challenge and interest from the high-quality curriculum experiences and enrichment activities on offer during and after the school day. The staff of the school provide a high level of care and support for students' academic and social well being. There are good communication systems to keep parents fully informed about the progress in achievement that their children are making. The school has established valuable partnerships to provide enrichment and interest for the students' academic and social development. There is not, at present, consistency in the use of the marking policy for assessing student work and in the use of differentiated instruction to match the students' learning needs. The monitoring of teacher outcomes is insufficiently developed to ensure that teachers are made fully accountable for their students' achievements. The inquiry team has met several times and has agreed that the impact of literacy on student learning will be the focus for their research.

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 has a very good system in place for the collection and analysis of students' achievement data in order to track their progress. Senior leaders use the New Visions data system well to review the progress of individual students, classrooms and subjects. Teachers have effective training in the use of data and regularly get electronic updates of the progress made by their students. They receive a high quality profile, which shows the progress the students are making in gaining credits, together with their scores in Regents tests. Students and parents get a pictorial report of the progress the student is making towards graduation. All grade 11 and grade 12 students have a valuable graduation plan and teachers discuss the plan with the students and their parents. Special education students and English language learners have very good support for

their learning and, as a result, make good progress in their achievement levels. Special education students have good support in self-contained English language arts and mathematics classes. Other students receive valuable support in English language arts and social studies collaborative classes. Teachers, working as a team, provide English language learners with helpful support for their learning. The students also receive extra intervention aligned to their levels as identified in external tests.

Senior leaders use the annual data from State tests to review the progress of the different subgroups in the school. The school has the capacity within their data system to analyze data by ethnic and gender groupings. The school does not, at present, use that facility to monitor periodically the performance of these sub-groups of students. The collection of marking period grades gives a useful picture of the progress students are making in each of their subjects. The school uses the data well to monitor the performance of groups of students in each classroom, grade and subject. It has entered into alliances with a number of schools, with similar student cohorts that use the New Vision data system, to share ideas and good practice.

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 proficient.

The school sets measurable goals and develops plans for improving student achievement. The goal for improving student attendance is challenging and there are supportive activities in place to make the goal achievable. All the subject goals for student improvement, however, are set at the same figure and take no account of the difference in the performance in each classroom and subject. There is not, at present, a collaborative process for negotiating challenging and differentiated goals for classrooms, grades and subjects. Students have very clear goals for credit accumulation and Regents grades as they progress towards graduation. The “almost on track” students are part of the “rising stars” program. A number of students from each grade have a program designed to help them improve their qualifications and they receive advice and guidance from a mentor. Students in greatest need of improvement have a very good program of support from the teachers and other staff and make good progress in their achievement levels. The school reviews all the academic and social factors that may have an impact on the achievement levels of at-risk students. They receive helpful services, such as individual or family counseling, from the guidance and advisory staff in the school.

When speaking of the high level of care and support their children receive from school, the parents said, “the school works like a family”. The teachers, students and parents share very high expectations of what students can achieve in the school. The school has excellent communication with the parents. Teachers contact them regularly by phone and e-mail to keep them updated on their child’s progress. Parents receive progress reports six times a year and they are able to discuss any issue with teachers, guidance counsellors and the parent coordinator at any time. The school runs many workshops for parents. They cover topics such as fire safety, gang awareness, parenthood, curriculum subjects and how to prepare your child for tests.

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 proficient.

Students have a wide range of learning opportunities through the very good curriculum in the school. The school follows the mandated curriculum and offers a wide range of arts subjects during and after the school day. The high quality arts program covers a wide range of disciplines, which include art, music, dance and band. The partnership with the Lincoln Center offers teachers and students the chance to be involved in theater work. High achieving students are able to undertake internships in business and in the community. They can also study advanced placement courses including calculus, English and Spanish. Other students take part in a work-study program where they can be involved in activities such as working as teacher's aides in elementary schools. The teachers create a positive environment for student learning. Most of the instruction in the school gives good engagement and interest for the students. The lack of structure and pace in some instruction is leading to students having less engagement and interest in their work. There is not yet consistency in the use of differentiated instruction in order to meet the students' learning needs. The many different systems used by teachers for producing marking period grades are not helpful to the students' understanding of their progress across the subjects.

Budgeting, staffing and scheduling are used effectively to support the curriculum and the instruction throughout the school. The principal shares the budget information with the teachers and makes decisions through a consultative process. Funding is used to support the arts courses and partnership arrangements. The principal has hired three special education teachers in order to support the increase in the number of special education students at the school. There is a respectful and caring culture in the school. The students, when speaking of principal, say "he connects with us and puts us first" and they speak positively about the respect shown to them by the teachers. The school has good systems in place for encouraging students to attend on a regular basis. Parents receive phone calls when students are absent. The attendance teacher visits homes and holds parent and student conferences when poor attendance is having an impact on a student's achievement.

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 are appropriate procedures in place for reviewing the quality of instructional practice in the school. School leaders undertake formal classroom observations and do walkthroughs which focus on particular aspects of instruction. After an observation, teachers write a reflection on their instruction. They bring student work to a meeting with a senior leader to demonstrate the impact of the instruction for the student. Teachers are able to extend their knowledge and skills through the professional development activities available to them. The school is rightly focusing on the use of literacy in all curriculum areas. In one of the training sessions, the teachers took part in a literacy

exercise similar to that experienced by the students. Discussions then followed on seven strategies to develop the use of literacy in the classroom.

Teachers work effectively in teams to plan curriculum, instruction and interventions to support student learning. They have the opportunity to meet in grade level and subject teams to plan curriculum and instruction. There are effective procedures in place for supporting new teachers. They have a mentor and meet with them several times a week. The students receive excellent support from guidance counselors and advisory staff in the school. One of the school's partners provides mentors, from the world of business, to work with and provide support for the students. Teachers adopt up to five students and meet them each week to discuss all aspects of the students' academic work. The school has helpful procedures in place, which lead to it having to a calm and caring culture. Students are fully aware of the school procedures and the discipline code. The school has developed partnership arrangements, which provide excellent support for students' academic and social achievement. The Good Shepherd services run the after-school programs and organize mentors to support the students. The Cooper Hewett Museum help in the design of community projects for the students.

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 proficient.

The school has plans and measurable goals for improving student achievement. The goals, however, are not sufficiently differentiated at subject and classroom level to take account of the present levels of achievement in those areas. The school does not currently set interim goals for monitoring the progress made in meeting long-term goals. Teachers use the very good data systems to track students' achievement levels and closely monitor their progress at the end of each marking period. They use the data well to review their curriculum and instruction plans and to devise intervention programs for students when needed. The principal uses the marking period data to monitor progress of students, classrooms and subjects. The principal uses the data to make strategic changes to plans and goals. For example, he moved the Saturday school program to be part of the after-school program and it resulted in better attendance from the students. The lack of a consistent approach by teachers in arriving at the grade for the marking period is not helpful when making comparisons of student progress within and across subjects. There is not, at present, a consistent approach to the monitoring of teacher outcomes to ensure the consistency of the impact on student achievements in classrooms. The data shows a very wide range of teacher outcomes in marking period assessments, with some classes having a very high number of the students failing their course.

The principal and teachers collaborate effectively to review and plan the curriculum and instruction. The teachers are fully involved in developing curriculum maps and pacing calendars from one academic year to the next. The school had its first graduation group of students in 2007. Following a full review, the school has made changes to programs and courses based on the lessons they have learned in taking the students through the graduation process. All members of the school community share the vision for continually improving the school. There is the capacity and the drive to continue to improve student achievement in the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: School for Community Research and Learning (X540)	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 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 makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X		