

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

New Day Academy

Middle-High School X245

**800 Home Street
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Daisy Fontanez

Dates of review: March 16 - 17, 2009
Lead Reviewer: Joel T. DiBartolomeo

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

New Day Academy is a middle-high school with 476 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 45% Black, 54% Hispanic, and fewer than 1% White. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 83.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 85% eligibility.

New Day Academy is a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools. The State Board of Regents authorized a waiver for the school in November 2008 to use Performance-Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs) in lieu of Regents examinations. Students present a portfolio to demonstrate mastery of core subjects at the conclusion of each year to fulfill graduation requirements.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The administration analyzes external accountability reports and data cultivated internally to create reports in all core subjects, disaggregated by most subgroups. They use the findings to set school goals, monitor student progress, identify off-track students, and make organizational decisions. However, their analysis does not include attention to ethnic groups. Grade teams create goals using data that is specific to their grade level, but this process takes place without consideration of school goals and, as a result, they do not align closely enough to them. In addition, because school and grade level action plans lack measurable interim, short-term goals; the evaluation of the impact of instructional decisions is not accurate, nor is there precise calibration of subsequent goals.

Teachers in all core subject areas have begun to meet with students to set individual goals. This process relies heavily on the use of rubrics that students and some teachers do not translate easily into specific performance indicators. As a result, next steps for learning are not always apparent to students or their parents. The teacher goal-setting process is not formalized and does not include the use of student outcomes to measure progress towards teacher or school goals. As such, the impact of practice does not link directly to student outcomes and teachers do not benefit from professional development that is precisely differentiated to their needs.

The school relies heavily on the use of project-based learning and authentic assessment to support student learning. While there are examples of good project-based practices, many teachers do not manage their classrooms efficiently, nor do they create projects that support rigorous, engaging instruction. As a result, students do not progress as well as they should. The principal and the faculty have worked to improve the quality of collaboration on behalf of the community they serve. They meet regularly within school and with colleagues from other schools to acquire and share practices related to portfolio-based assessment practices. However, they do not use data to show the benefit that these collaborations have on instruction or student outcomes. The school offers effective support programs, specialized personnel and a number of active partners to serve students and their parents.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school analyzes relevant periodic and summative data routinely to identify trends in student progress and performance and to determine students' strengths and areas of need.
- The school disaggregates each data source diligently to understand better the unique needs of special education students, English language learners, boys and girls.
- Teachers enhance students' interest in their lessons by connecting them to real world examples.
- The principal and the faculty work together effectively to do what is best for students, earning them the trust of the community they serve.
- Teachers meet regularly in the school and with colleagues from other schools to learn more about portfolio-based assessment practices.
- The school offers students and their parents a comprehensive set of supports and activities that bridge the cultural differences between home and school.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine collaborative goal-setting practices to ensure that goals align, are measurable and differentiated, and ensure that all action plans include interim checkpoints to evaluate impact, inform future planning and the setting of subsequent goals.
- Continue to clarify expectations for project-based learning so that there is greater consistency in the way teachers use data to differentiate instruction and challenge all learners.
- Formalize the goal-setting process for teachers and include the use of data to evaluate the impact of practice in order to better differentiate focus, support and supervision.
- Begin to use assessment data as well as focused learning walks and inter-visitations to determine the impact of professional development on instruction and to make changes as necessary.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The administration uses ARIS and other tools to create detailed data reports in all core subject areas and attendance. During the summer, parents and school staff interrogate rigorously external and internal school and student performance reports. The analysis includes identifying need areas in student progress and performance, which are disaggregated by English language learner, special education, male, and female. It also helps the administration to identify students who are unlikely to graduate and to inform instructional and organizational decisions.

Teachers administer baseline assessments and use Design Your Own (DYO) Consortium rubrics three times a year in all core subject areas to assess student progress. Mid-year Roundtables also offer students and teachers valuable information to improve portfolio performance. However, teachers do not undertake these assessment procedures consistently across all subject areas, nor do they compile the results across subjects or disaggregate by subgroups as they do with other data. Thus, administrators are unable to make informed, school-wide instructional decisions. This limits considerably the impact of instruction on student learning, the reporting of results and the identification of the specific needs of subgroups.

Once scored, teachers share periodic assessment results with students. Teachers merge the highlights of these assessments into "Narrative" progress reports that they share with parents twice a year. Despite these commendable efforts, students and parents cannot always articulate clearly the next steps for learning. This problem is compounded as students are unable to assess their own performance because the narrative reports do not capture performance at the skill or sub-skill level.

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.

Members of the school community collaborate to develop and monitor school-wide goals. While the 2008-2009 goals are differentiated by performance levels, they do not account for other subgroups. For instance, there are no specific targets or instructional plans for Hispanic male students, whose performance is of concern. Grade teams create goals; however, this process takes place without consideration of school goals. The result is that grade goals do not align with school goals. In addition, because action plans do not include measureable interim checkpoints, the evaluation of impact, future planning activities, and the setting of subsequent goals are compromised.

Teachers in all core subject areas have begun to meet with students to set individual goals. However, they are inconsistent in using action plans to outline short-term goals

related to skills or sub-skills and in determining interim benchmarks to check student progress. In addition, this process relies heavily on the use of subject area rubrics that students and, in some cases, teachers find difficult to understand and to translate into specific performance indicators. As a result, students are unaware of their precise next steps for learning.

Narrative report cards and school meetings help convey curriculum-related expectations to students and their parents. Hallway displays communicate the importance of attendance, quality academic work and notable student improvements. Administrators spend their time strategically meeting with teachers as “coaches”, and the principal meets with the attendance team weekly to underscore the importance of these venues.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

Students have access to a well-balanced, liberal arts curriculum. Coaches review teachers’ curriculum maps to ensure that they align with State standards. The instructional program is enriched through a range of valuable partners. For example, teachers work with Advocacy Lab to enhance lessons by connecting them to important global issues such as AIDS and world hunger. Real Work Development works with the school to transform its advisory program to include the development of literacy skills.

The school makes extensive use of project-based learning and there are examples of successful project-based practices in some classrooms. Resources needed to support New Day’s vision for its classrooms are evident. Small class sizes make it easier for teachers to “coach” students and there are subject coaches and consultants to support instructional practice. However, students are unable to assess themselves or their peers because of their limited understanding of the rubrics. As a result, while teachers move around their classrooms providing feedback and direction, students often sit and wait for their turn to move forward. This wastes valuable learning time. In addition, teachers do not use data effectively to differentiate learning or to assign students to work partners. Consequently, rigorous and engaging instruction is not secure in all classrooms.

The principal, faculty and support staff work together to do what is best for all students. These efforts have earned the trust of the school community. While school climate has improved, there remain concerns among the faculty that students are not always able to negotiate the informality permitted by the school’s philosophy and to make sensible decisions regarding their conduct and academic responsibilities.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The principal meets with teachers prior to observing them to develop a plan to support classroom practice. The process is not formal and does not include the use of student outcomes or long- and short-term goals to measure growth. In addition, feedback following formal observations is not always aligned to areas of growth identified in the

pre-observation conferences. As a result, the impact of this practice does not lead directly to improvement in student outcomes and professional development does not build on the teachers' strengths or target their needs.

The school provides good formal and informal support for new teachers. All teachers in the school meet regularly in various collaborative settings to share practice, look at student work, conduct inquiry projects and write curriculum. Many teachers benefit from meeting with colleagues from other schools to share and reflect on practices related to portfolio-based assessment.

Students and their parents enjoy good supports and activities that bridge the cultural differences between home and school. The school's advisory system ensures that all students have an advocate who cares for their social and academic development. The school's three social workers and attendance teachers are well aware of issues interfering with student learning and develop individual plans to ameliorate them. Except for abundant, favorable anecdotal evidence, the school fails to use data to discern the impact these many supports have on accelerating student learning.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 administration analyzes external accountability reports as well as data developed in the school at different points during the year. Subject departments use data to revamp curriculum maps and to develop extra support programs, such as credit recovery classes and a Saturday Academy. An analysis of school climate data resulted in the procurement of a partner, RAMAPO, which supports teachers with classroom management strategies. However, because school and grade level action plans lack measurable, interim short-term goals, teachers cannot say with conviction whether these choices have the impact they desire.

All teachers use curriculum-related rubrics to assess student performance and to adjust next steps for their learning. Teachers are aware that the use of more sophisticated diagnostic tools to better identify aspects of reading or math impeding student progress would compliment this process. In addition, the administration does not aggregate this data into reports that would help them make more strategic decisions about adjustments necessary to increase the pace of change or improve instructional practice.

Administrators believe that the school's professional development opportunities support their efforts to implement the new teaching and assessment strategies. However, this support is not evaluated by studying student data or by focused learning walks and classroom inter-visitations. As a result, the school cannot judge with certainty whether professional development has the intended impact on instruction.

The school's Comprehensive Educational Plan provides the school with a data-informed framework to guide the on-going evolution of the school. School leaders acknowledge that the transition to PBATs is a "messy" process and view this as "natural and expected." In fact, the manner in which the transition is staged and phased, has not allowed sufficient time for students and teachers to understand deeply the rubrics used or to embrace the rationale for the change, which both compromise the teaching and learning process.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: New Day Academy	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?		X		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

To what extent do ...	△	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent do school leaders...	△	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 ...	△	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key

△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
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