



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Manhattan School for Career Development

High School 751

**113 East 4 Street
New York
NY 10003**

Principal: Tobias Weissman

Dates of review: March 5 - 6, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Georgie Beasley

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Manhattan School for Career Development is an Alternate Assessment school with 236 students. The school population comprises 56% Black, 40% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 73% of the students enrolled and girls account for 27%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 63.9%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Manhattan School for Career Development is a special education school, serving students with moderate to severe learning and emotional disabilities. There are several worksites across the City and two inclusion classes housed at two City high schools.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal has a clear vision about what good learning should look like and continues to strive to establish this in every class. Through regular visits to the classrooms, he has successfully spread his vision for students' learning in many classes. The school has yet to raise everyone's aspirations for student achievement, and to build capacity in evaluating instruction and curriculum by fully assessing the impact made on student learning, achievement and progress.

The principal and staff want students to do well, and they concentrate on making sure those who remain for the full four years succeed in at least one key area. There is a positive rapport between adults and students due to strong relationships and a climate of mutual respect. All teaching staff are invited to join meetings so that they can be involved in the school's work. The inquiry team has successfully instigated relevant and formalized assessments. These enable the school to track student progress regularly during the year and provide the means to evaluate the impact of instruction and curriculum on student learning and progress. The parent coordinator works tenaciously to involve as many parents as she can in the school's work and in helping their children to succeed. Excellent and well-established partnerships make a significant contribution to students' personal development and the acquisition of life-functioning skills. The school continues to be successful in finding placements for students, which prepare them well for the world of work and enable many to leave with some kind of high school diploma.

The school and students have measurable long-term goals that are clearly aligned to the school improvement priorities and to students' goals in their individual education plans (IEPs). Smaller next-step learning goals are not always personalized for individual students in order to guide the most effective adjustment to curriculum and differentiation of instruction. Consequently, lesson objectives do not always focus sufficiently well on each student's precise learning needs. While most students know their long-term goals, they cannot articulate clearly enough what they need to do next to improve. Teachers and guidance counselors have implemented effective programs for improving student attendance and reducing tardiness although this remains an issue for the school to resolve.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a very clear vision for instruction and learning, and about the goals and actions required to further improve the school's performance.
- The school develops students' social skills and prepares them well for the world of work through its effective guidance and transition programs.
- The school collects a range of assessment data so that teachers have a full picture of each student's academic and personal learning needs.
- There is a very positive rapport between adults and students because relationships are strong and which results in a supportive learning climate where students are confident to discuss any concerns.
- The school has established systems for informing and involving parents in its work and their children's education.
- Technology and vocational workshops engage students' interest and motivates them to achieve their long-term school goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Implement the principal's vision for student learning and instruction to raise further; staff, student and family aspirations for student academic and personal achievement.
- Identify and share small-step personalized learning goals in all classes that are aligned to IEP goals and the curriculum so that students know what they need to do next to improve, especially in reading, writing, and math.
- Ensure all teachers use the small-step personalized learning goals to identify precise learning objectives in lessons in order to differentiate and align instruction more closely to individual student's needs.
- Build capacity to monitor the quality of learning and teaching more rigorously to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction by its impact on student learning and progress, and their attendance.

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 school collects a range of assessment and attendance data about each student's performance, which builds a clear picture of achievement. Annual goal progress reports, individual education plans, teachers' own assessments and new portfolios of achievement keep an accurate record of student progress. Records of achievement in vocational workshops enable students to assess their own achievement in study skills, such as how well they approached learning or collaborated on a task. In order to improve attendance, students are now responsible for tracking their own attendance and punctuality so they can see more clearly, when and why they are absent from school. Through involvement in transition planning and daily reviews of progress at each transition site, students are able to track effectively personal and vocational achievement and progress in off-site transition programs.

The inquiry team has analyzed a range of data and identified the most effective assessments for tracking the progress and achievement of its target population. As a result, the school has adopted Scantron and Acuity this year as its preferred formal assessment system to more effectively track student progress in reading, writing and math. A more detailed scrutiny of student achievements in reading has resulted in much more focused planning and delivery of comprehension skills in some classes. Systems to track the progress of other students in core subjects are less rigorous due to the absence of precisely targeted next-step learning goals.

Parents and students are kept informed of their performance through regular teacher conferences and progress reports. Involvement in annual reviews of individual education plans enables parents and students to know their long-term goals and the mandated services and instruction required to help improve achievement. Systems are not yet sufficiently embedded for all students and families to track progress more regularly in reading, writing and math, and other core subjects offered.

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's Comprehensive Educational Plan and student IEPs have sufficiently detailed long-term goals to guide effective supports from related services, and the general management of instruction and curriculum. Goals have long-term and interim measures of success so that the school knows when it has been successful. A number of staff, including the parent coordinator and related services staff are included in the

evaluation of goals through regular team meetings to discuss different aspects of the school's work. The fitness-gram program is an exemplar model of how to identify long-term goals and display them in a way that enables students to track their own progress towards their achievement. Vocabulary is displayed to remind students to use the correct terminology when talking about their progress and achievements. This model is being adopted in other workshop classes with varying degrees of success. Effective feedback and guidance at work-based transition sites help ensure many students graduate successfully once they join the transition programs.

Goals are not sufficiently personalized for each student's needs to guide learning effectively enough to maximize progress in reading, writing and math. Teachers conference regularly with students to give them feedback about their work. Some teachers use rubrics to guide students' grades but rubrics often focus on students' attitudes to work rather than the precise knowledge and skills they must develop to improve their levels. As a result, students cannot say with enough clarity how to improve their work. Many know they have to "improve their reading" or "get better at math" but when asked how, they say, "work harder" or "complete the assignments on time." They are less able to talk about the precise skills or strategy they need to acquire to be more successful. Parents receive regular updates about their children's progress and frequent newsletters about the school's many accomplishments. Most are confident that if they need to talk to someone about their children's personal and academic needs, teaching and related services staff, the parent coordinator and administrators are readily available.

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.

There is no doubt that staff want students to succeed. Ensuring all students have the necessary life skills to get a job is at the forefront of the school's work. The transition program is a key motivator to student success and is very well organized. Once they join the program, most students succeed in finding employment when they leave school. The vocational workshops engage most students' interests and motivate them to learn. Nevertheless, too many students still "drop-out" during the first two years at the school. Girls in particular would like a more varied range of workshops that better match their interests.

Despite the constant articulation of goals to raise aspirations for student achievement, teachers have inconsistent expectations of what students can do, especially in reading, writing and math. As a result, while some students are extremely successful, most students do not make enough progress in these subjects. Some good practice is seen when in a well-planned and well-organized math class, the learning objective was differentiated for the two student groups. Students completed different types and levels of activity that helped them gain a greater understanding of percentages. However, due to the absence of precise next-step goals in some classes, learning is not always defined clearly enough and not aligned sufficiently well to student's individual learning needs. Students complete the same work with different amounts of support, which is not always targeted sufficiently well. The inclusion class observed is more like a homework club where students complete assignments from earlier classes.

Strong and positive relationships between students and adults result in a mostly positive school climate. Students are respectful and most have positive attitudes to school. The women's group and young men's club give students excellent opportunities to talk about personal issues and to identify growth in personal development. Students in the transition program know the importance of getting to work on time everyday and strive their best to do so. When they have difficulty, they only have to ask, and sometimes not to ask, to receive an early wake-up call from the teacher to ensure they are up and ready on time. Attendance and tardiness remain issues for some students, although those who have 100% attendance are justly proud of this achievement.

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.

Professional development and supports are effectively organized and meet the needs of individual teachers, paraprofessionals, related services staff and the school's needs well. Teachers new to the profession and school have a mentor who supports constantly to ensure they have the resources and assistance they need to develop their teaching expertise. All staff groups value the many opportunities to work collaboratively, and to attend professional development workshops both on and off-site. There is a strong focus on inquiry and using data to discuss each student's needs when allocating him or her to workshops and programs. As a result, the school has successfully transitioned many students to work-based programs and inclusion classes, which in turn has improved attendance and lowered the dropout rate to some extent in older grades. The principal knows his staff well and gives objective feedback after visiting classes. He does not always have enough time to follow up on observations because of the numerous sites to be visited. The assistant principals organize their areas of responsibility well, although when visiting classes they do not yet focus sufficiently on whether instruction is as effective as it should be in raising student achievement, especially the inclusion classes.

Partnerships are well established and a strong feature of the school's work, playing a major role in helping most students to find and to stick with a job at the end of the program. The Model Transition Project (MTP) helps fund the school's numerous work sites, the longest and most established with Manhattan Transition Center. Guidance counselors ensure students receive their mandatory services and any additional supports should students request it. Parents say "Every adult is a guidance counselor," supporting one of the school's key values that every adult who works at the school is responsible for every student's personal needs and achievement.

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 principal has a very clear vision for how to plan and deliver learning so students "can finally learn what they have previously failed to grasp". A strong focus on raising staff understanding about the importance of differentiating instruction by methods as well

as support and levels is helping some teachers to plan effective learning in classes. Not every teacher is convinced that this is the right path to tread.

The work of the inquiry team is building staff expertise in using data to reflect on the effectiveness of classes and curriculum. Its work has resulted in a greater focus on teaching individual subject strands in reading and using the “4-square” writing method to extend students’ writing skills in workshops and other subjects. All workshops and subjects focus on expanding students’ vocabulary. Those in transition programs learn how to present a positive image and answer questions fully when applying and attending interviews for a job.

Due to improved monitoring, the school has a clear view of its strengths and areas for development. Three key goals include a stronger focus on improving attendance and tardiness, greater parental involvement and improvements in instructional practice. Successful achievement of the goals is measured by student achievement. There are some interim benchmarks identified in the Comprehensive Educational Plan to help everyone monitor progress towards their achievement.

The school has started to follow up absence and tardiness more rigorously and has planned actions to prevent the annual dip in June. Students themselves would like to see an improvement in these aspects because they find late arrivers interrupt lessons unnecessarily. Due to more focused analysis of attendance data, the school has identified that girls tend to be absent more than boys. It has not yet identified what causes this including the possibility it may be due to a less relevant range of workshops and work sites for the girls. Students are consulted fully when evaluating the suitability of work experience and many move to new work sites if necessary, and so meeting this particular aspect of student learning effectively.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Manhattan School of Career Development	△	➤	✓	+
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>				
	△	➤	✓	+
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>				
	△	➤	✓	+
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.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
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.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
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.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
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