

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**New Venture Academy**

**Middle School 219  
3630 Third Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Dominic A. Cipollone**

**Dates of review: October 23 – 24, 2008  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Salvador A. Fernandez**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

New Venture Academy is a middle school with 456 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 44% Black, 54% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Native American students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 87.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 92% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

The New Venture Academy has undergone a major transformation in the last five years during the principal's tenure at the school. The school has made good progress addressing issues identified in the previous Quality Review report. The parents speak highly of the changes that have occurred and feel that their children are safe and are respected by the faculty. The school continues its quest to actively involve parents by providing curriculum workshops and by sending progress reports between report cards. The school leaders have developed a nurturing environment that is conducive to learning and this has resulted in increased attendance from last year. Students like coming to school, they feel safe and like the fact that their teachers push them to achieve. The teachers are there for support and keep the students focused on learning. The students especially appreciate the data binder that was created this year, because they are able to track their own progress at least twice a year. One student stated, "We take ownership for our learning. We don't have to ask our teachers. We track our progress ourselves".

School leaders analyzed the summative data and progress report and decided to hire an English language arts coach. The coach has started to work with teachers to enhance their ability to differentiate lessons, engage and challenge students. Informal observations are conducted regularly and provide immediate feedback to teachers using Google documents on the internet for two-way communication. As a result, the school leaders have developed a professional development plan that they intend to introduce in November. However, the plan does not include interim checkpoints to assess and provide effective feedback for teachers in order to set goals for improving instructional practice.

The inquiry team has started developing a systematic structure to track students' progress for the target population. As yet, school leaders and faculty do not have a clear understanding of how to set measurable goals for improving student learning outcomes, or how to monitor and revise curriculum in a timely manner for improving student learning school wide.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has developed a safe and nurturing environment that is conducive to learning and one where the relationship between teachers and students is one of mutual respect.
- The school has developed ways of ensuring that parents and students are both able to keep track of progress by providing students with data binder.
- The school continues its quest to actively involve parents by providing curriculum workshops and by sending progress reports between report cards.
- The school has developed a strong partnership with different service providers to enrich the curriculum in the Arts and physical education.
- The strategic allocation of resources to support teachers' and students' learning is carefully targeted on school-wide goals for improving instruction.
- The Inquiry Team has started to lay the foundation for developing a systematic structure to track students' progress for English language learners and special education students.
- Parents speak highly of the positive change in the school climate that is leading to their children being engaged and interested in their learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop a clear understanding of how to set measurable goals for improving learning outcomes at school, grade, classroom and individual student level.
- Develop a structure that will enable the school to monitor and revise the curriculum and professional development activities in an effective manner for improving student learning.
- Further develop teachers' ability to analyze and interpret summative and formative data to plan differentiated activities that match student achievement levels in order to accelerate the learning process.
- Enhance the professional development plan to include a structure that provides an opportunity for teachers to set goals for improving instructional practice.

## 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 has a good understanding of how to analyze and interpret summative and formative data. This helps leaders to identify patterns and trends and develop baseline scores for students. School leaders also use the data from standardized tests and analyze it to gauge progress made by different subgroups. As a result, the school has developed a data binder for each student to keep a running account of their progress. During the weekly grade-level meetings teachers discuss the topics being covered in their class. As a result, an interdisciplinary approach has evolved with teachers covering the same topics in order for students to make connections and reinforce their learning. The school has also implemented weekly small learning community meetings. These focus on attendance, overall climate of the grade and how this impacts learning. Hence, attendance has increased and a positive tone is visible throughout the school. Curriculum meetings are also held weekly to go over the item skills analysis and other forms a data in English language arts, math, science and social studies.

Teachers hold data conference meetings with parents to talk about their children's progress and explain how they can help them at home. At this meeting, parents go over summative and formative data with teachers and get an understanding of their child's starting point for the year. Parents are very receptive to information about their child's learning needs and achievements. A progress report is sent home midway between each report card cycle keeping parents aware of their child's progress. The school has established a good communication system by which they have an open exchange with parents.

The work of the inquiry team has enabled teachers to develop a good understanding of the needs of special education students and English language learners. Through inquiry team analyses, teachers identified certain patterns and trends that revealed blatant deficiencies in student learning. The school leaders and teachers met and provided these subgroups with additional support through extended day and one period of academic intervention daily, to target specific skills identified by the inquiry team.

**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.**

School leaders and teachers work collaboratively using school data to set annual goals for the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The school shares these

goals with the leadership team to get their input. School leaders use many different forms of communication to share goals with the entire school community. For example, phone master, Google and Wiki pages providing parents with up to date information via the internet, and a monthly calendar. Parents feel strongly that administration make communication a priority. The school also keeps them informed of their child's learning goals through the use of the data binder detailing annual learning goals in English language arts, math, social studies and science. These goals are updated twice a year by students and teachers. Data Binders also contain valuable formative and summative data that enables parents, students and teachers to initiate a conversation about next learning steps needed. The data binder also empowers students to track their progress by showing areas of strengths and weakness that they need to address in order to meet their learning goal. However, the school does not have a systematic structure to implement interim checkpoints that include set timeframes to evaluate and revise goals for ongoing improvement of instruction.

The school provides plenty of opportunity for students to continue to work at home by providing parents with a range of workshops that will help understand how they can help their child reach their goals. Specifically, parents are encouraged to attend the Computers for Youth program workshop. After completion, families receive a free desktop computer for home use. By facilitating this computer for families, students can take advantage of the new Renzulli Learning System that provides students with the opportunity to take charge of their learning, opening the door to thousands of interest-based websites.

**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.**

The principal has developed a nurturing environment that is conducive to learning. The curriculum provides different instructional strategies for students to meet or exceed their learning goals. School leaders and faculty provide students with a standards-based curriculum in all core subjects. Teachers have tailored units of study to match students' educational needs. Curriculum maps are designed to pace instruction in order for teachers to monitor student progress and make revisions when necessary. Writing has been creatively integrated into all core subjects. Technology is integrated through the Renzulli Learning System and this captivates students' interest and develops skills that may be deficient. The school provides a targeted academic intervention program to support students who are academically at risk. However, teachers do not analyze data to plan differentiated activities that match student achievement and learning styles, accelerating the learning process. Recently, an English language arts coach was recruited to develop teachers' abilities to plan differentiated activities using the balanced literacy workshop model.

There is a respectful relationship between adults and students. Students feel that they can ask their teachers for advice. The school does a tremendous outreach to promote good attendance and to maintain a climate of trust. This is evidenced by monthly assemblies, which are held to celebrate student achievement, in hallway displays where

pictures of the student of the month are posted and through a big display in front of the main office showcasing students with perfect attendance.

The school leaders are committed to providing an environment that promotes learning. The allocation of resources to support learning is evident through the addition of an English language arts coach, the Renzulli Learning System which supports differentiation as well as individualized student work, the allocation of an additional period of academic intervention to provide ongoing support, small learning community, grade level and curriculum meetings.

**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.**

Informal observations have become the tool by which the school leaders communicate and support teachers on how to improve practice. Teachers get immediate feedback from informal observations via a web-page on the Internet. Teachers are given the opportunity to reflect on feedback. The administration has also increased the number of formal observation to four. They started conducting formal observation in October. This structure provided the school leaders with the opportunity to analyze the feedback from teachers and understand what teachers need. After reflecting on the feedback from both informal and formal observations, the administration further develop the school's professional development plan to include goal setting and engaging students using a differentiated approach. The school does not have interim benchmarks to assess and provide an opportunity for teachers to evaluate and revise classroom practice to improve student outcomes.

The inquiry team has started laying the foundation for developing a strategic system to track students' progress. The team reflected on last year's strategies that were successful. They kept a few of the strategies, and decided to recruit new members for the team. The team also collaborates with the staff to plan strategies that will be implemented to improve student outcomes. One strategy that teachers will introduce is question-answer relationships. The team understands concise implementation of this new strategy deepens students' comprehension and has a direct impact on their learning outcomes.

The school has developed strong partnerships with different service providers to meet the social and academic needs of students. These programs include Beacon, which provides students with additional tutorial programs to address academic needs, chess, physical education and visual and performing arts activities. Turnaround for Children provides support and intervention risk students. The school leaders are committed to providing continuous support for their school community.

**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 school's vision to provide students with a well-rounded education through which they feel a sense of success has been clearly communicated to the school community in many ways. School leaders, faculty, students and families understand that the school is taking a holistic approach to engage the learners. Evidence of this is seen by the extra curricular learning opportunities the school provides for students. These go beyond the classroom experience by connecting what is learned in school to real life experiences. Students feel a sense of accomplishment after completing the tasks assigned in school. The students' use their newly provided data binder to track their progress. They feel a sense of trust bestowed upon them by teachers that has led students to take ownership for their own learning. As result, students feel successful and confident in meeting their learning outcomes.

The school has systems in place to formatively assess students, such as running records, conferencing notes, unit tests, diagnostic tests and teacher-made tests. The teachers use all these forms of assessment to reflect on students' progress and how they can modify their lessons as needed to accelerate learning. However, the school does not have a formal structure that enables administrators and faculty to monitor and make revisions to the curriculum and professional development activities in an effective manner for improving learning.

The school regularly evaluates summative data at different points to modify organizational decisions. This enables leaders to enhance the social and academic climate of school. Monthly assessments are also used to determine where interventions are needed. During the monthly cabinet data meetings, information is shared about trends or patterns that are occurring school wide and what interventions are needed to remediate or enhance student learning. The school leaders have a good understanding of the overall social and academic needs of the school and provide basic support for staff to improve instruction. However, the school does not have a systematic plan which includes effective timeframes and interim goals to ensure and keep track of ongoing improvement of instruction.

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: New Ventures Academy</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<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?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 focuses analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<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?		<b>X</b>		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

## 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, DYO, 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.

<b>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.</b>							
<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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X				
<b>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.</b>							
<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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X				
<b>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.</b>							
<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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>