

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**Coalition School for Social Change**

**High School 409**

**2351 First Avenue**

**New York**

**NY 10035**

**Principal: Eileen Miller**

**Dates of review: February 8-9, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Nancy Gannon**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Coalition School for Social Change is a high school with 393 students from grade nine through grade twelve. The school population comprises 31% Black, 66% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 81.2%.

### Overall Evaluation

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

Coalition School for Social Change is a small school that has gone through some major upheaval in the last six months due to an unwanted move from midtown to East Harlem, a locale that offers a difficult commute to a large portion of the student population. However, despite an initial angry reaction from the school community and a significant register loss that created a big budget challenge for the principal, the school has set a positive tone and the tightly knit faculty is determined to support students. The principal has managed to keep intact, costly supports for faculty, including scheduling meeting time for teachers and establishing strong coaches throughout the school. The students are friendly and most speak positively about the support they receive in the school, saying that teachers “do everything they can to help you. They don’t just know you academically, they know you personally.” However, some teachers illustrate lower expectations by giving work that is below grade level or lacking in rigor, and therefore some students are not as challenged as they should be. Although there is an online grade program that parents can access, a portion of parents do not know it existed and are not informed enough about their child’s progress.

The curriculum is uneven but the school is in the process of developing more structure to ensure that every student is pushed. Currently, departments are strategically mapping out every department’s scope and sequence to create clear connections from grade to grade, along with rigorous work attached to grades and to key standards. Strong and differentiated professional development helps to support the growth of critical thinking and differentiation, but some teachers still need improvement in this approach to build multiple entry points to cover the various learning requirements of students. School leaders are data-savvy and use summative assessment scores and other data from which they can accurately set goals and programs. They have also created specific plans to support teachers in their growth. All teachers work in strong dedicated teams that effectively look at data related to a target population, although they do not yet set measurable goals for that population. The useful work of these teams is not clearly linked to school-wide goals, and this disconnect slows progress toward accelerating student learning. School leaders have regular meetings to look at data and to monitor and adjust progress toward school goals, but they have not articulated measurable outcomes and therefore cannot clearly identify where they are on the journey toward better student outcomes.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school offers a wide range of targeted instructional supports, including differentiated coaching, intervisitations, and one-on-one conferencing, to cultivate a pedagogically strong staff that accelerates student learning.
  - Teachers, in conversation with school leaders, set goals about their next learning steps. Observation reports are aligned to those goals and to school goals to support faculty in developing strong teaching habits. When a science teacher wanted to strengthen the low-level discussions in her classroom the assistant principal linked that work with the school-wide goal around critical thinking and paired her with the science coach, who helped her develop strategies. Although her first observation showed weak skills in facilitating high-level class dialogues, her second observation showed huge growth.
  - Multiple coaches work in department meetings and in one-on-one sessions to provide teaching support. Those coaches help to lead professional development for whole-staff meetings and arrange intervisitations. The literacy coach, in collaboration with others, planned and led a professional development around differentiation. In the meeting, teachers worked together on their current plans, finding key places to differentiate the work to support a range of students. The variety of learning opportunities helps teachers across departments and grades to develop firm skills that support student learning.
- The strong teacher collaboration throughout the school ensures that teachers reflect on their teaching practice and adjust instruction to improve student learning.
  - All teachers participate in “Targeted Student Talk”, once a week on their grade level team. These teams use inquiry to examine learning issues of a small struggling population of students. For example, at a grade nine team meeting, a teacher leader facilitated a discussion around developing supports for one student who was struggling at writing. Teachers compared her to another student who had struggled with the same issue, and noted that she now successfully uses a brainstorming map before outlining, resulting in improved writing. They agreed to try this same strategy with the current student and moved on to suggest other supports: positive reinforcement, breaking big tasks into smaller pieces, and encouraging her to be on time. By adjusting instruction to support struggling students, teachers have seen improvement in learning outcomes.
- School leaders consistently examine student scholarship data and use those findings to move toward a more rigorous and coherent curriculum that better supports students in their academic growth.
  - Throughout the school and as a response to scholarship data, teachers are beginning to develop curriculum maps that consciously spiral the curriculum so that one year strategically builds on key learning from the previous year. In conjunction, each department is providing sample work

for key assignments in every grade. Departments have begun to use these pieces as anchors for academic expectations across the curriculum at every grade level.

- Because a portion of English language learners recently struggled with two Regents tests, the school created a second semester class taught by an English language learner teacher and a Global History teacher to better support the progress of those students.
- The committed principal has worked strategically to manage resources in a way that supports student learning.
  - Despite a dramatic register loss that resulted from the relocation of the school, the principal has kept key structures that are expensive but necessary. For example, the schedule continues to prioritize parallel teaching and teacher meeting time because those are essentials deemed necessary to progress students successfully.
  - The school has also prioritized ongoing funding for multiple coaches to support the many young teachers across the staff, as well as experienced teachers who learn and share ways to accelerate student achievement.
- School leaders and teachers look at a wide range of data including ARIS information and school-designed diagnostics to identify specific challenges and better address student learning outcomes.
  - By carefully analyzing: student scholarship results, Regents scores, the learning environment survey, attendance, and other data, leaders are able to identify areas that need more intense focus. Using assessment data, the school targeted grade 9 for more support and smaller classes. This change has led to better pass rates within the cohort.
- To attain their long-term vision leaders have aligned school goals with key leverage points for academic growth.
  - The school holds a clear theory that the low scholarship reflected in last year's data will improve through strengthening differentiation, literacy, and critical thinking. In setting the current year's goals, the principal and other leaders have focused on increasing all three strands through professional development and coaching. After one semester, students' in school pass rates and Regents pass rates have increased because of this work.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Establish a system for tracking progress toward annual and interim school-wide goals with key benchmarks along the way to gauge that the school is making measurable gains in student outcomes.
  - Currently, the school has clear and well-chosen goals, but not all of them are articulated in a measurable way and do not have specific benchmarks. Thus, the school cannot mark the rate of progress toward better student outcomes.

- Teachers have selected target populations, but have not articulated measurable goals for them, thus making it difficult to measure the impact of their interventions on academic progress.
- Develop clear systems to evaluate the effectiveness of “Targeted Student Talk” and strengthen the work of all teacher teams.
  - Currently, teachers take teamwork very seriously and are willing to work hard together to improve student instruction. There are established systems to monitor the work and grade team leaders meet with the principal regularly. However, at this time, the school has not linked the work of these teams to key strategies the school has chosen to improve instruction, such as differentiation, literacy strategies, and critical thinking across the grades. This lack of alignment hinders the effectiveness of the work done by teams to improve instruction.
- Extend support for teachers to more effectively implement strategies that engage all students through differentiated work that emphasizes critical thinking and to improve academic outcomes.
  - The school has articulated a clear set of beliefs about the links between critical thinking and academic success, and currently teachers are beginning to develop strategies that push students to do rigorous work. An English teacher exemplified this work with an assignment on *Twelve Angry Men*, along with a clear rubric that set high expectations. In addition, a social studies class pushed students to debate a human rights issue and asked students to take notes on the quality of the answers their peers gave. However, this quality of work is not evident across all classrooms and some teachers are giving low-level tasks that do not allow students to reach their highest potential.
  - Currently, some teachers are using differentiation to engage students in rigorous work with a variety of entry points within their lessons but many other teachers describe differentiation as something that happens during lunch or after school. By not offering sufficient differentiated entry points regularly, the school is not supporting the academic growth of students in the necessary variety of tasks and levels to get the best progress possible.
- Strengthen cross-curricular work, along with the identification of anchor work within each subject to ensure a coherent curriculum that pushes student learning.
  - The school is beginning to create curriculum maps in every department that emphasize key standards by linking them to specific work products, each of which will have sample anchor papers to illustrate the high expectations connected with the product. At present, the curriculum does not fully engage all students or define strong work products for them to challenge them fully.
  - Currently the school is beginning to identify specific critical thinking strategies that require rigorous thinking in every classroom, but at this time, classrooms are uneven in offering challenging work to every student.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

|   |   |          |          |          |
|---|---|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>School name: Coalition School for Social Change</b>  | Δ | ➤        | ✓        | +        |
| <b>Overall QR Score</b>   |   |          | <b>X</b> |          |
| <b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>                             |   |          |          |          |
| <i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>  | Δ | ➤        | ✓        | +        |
| 1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?   |   | <b>X</b> |          |          |
| 1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products? |   | <b>X</b> |          |          |
| 1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?  |   |          |          | <b>X</b> |
| 1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?   |   |          | <b>X</b> |          |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>  |   | <b>X</b> |          |          |
| <b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>                 |   |          |          |          |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i>   | Δ | ➤        | ✓        | +        |
| 2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?   |   |          | <b>X</b> |          |
| 2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?   |   |          | <b>X</b> |          |
| 2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?  |   |          | <b>X</b> |          |
| 2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?   |   | <b>X</b> |          |          |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>  |   |          | <b>X</b> |          |

| <b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>  |                       |   |  |   |                   |   |                       |
|--|-----------------------|---|--|---|-------------------|---|-----------------------|
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i>  | Δ                     | ➤ | ✓  | + |                   |   |                       |
| 3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?   |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?   |                       | X |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?   |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?  |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>   |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.</b>                           |                       |   |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i>   | Δ                     | ➤ | ✓  | + |                   |   |                       |
| 4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers? |                       |   |  | X |                   |   |                       |
| 4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?  |                       |   |  | X |                   |   |                       |
| 4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?        |                       |   |  | X |                   |   |                       |
| 4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>                   |                       |   |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| <i>To what extent does the school...</i>   | Δ                     | ➤ | ✓  | + |                   |   |                       |
| 5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?  |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?                               |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?   |                       | X |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| 5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?  |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>   |                       |   | X  |   |                   |   |                       |
| <b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>  |                       |   |  |   |                   |   |                       |
| Δ  | <b>Underdeveloped</b> | ➤ | <b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b> | ✓ | <b>Proficient</b> | + | <b>Well Developed</b> |