

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

The Halsey School

Middle School K296

**125 Covert Street
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Maria Barreto

Dates of review: October 27 - 28, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Lillian Druck

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Halsey School is a middle school with 549 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 45% Black, 52% Hispanic, 1% Native American, 1% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 90.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school conveys high expectations that promote parent involvement and support learning so that students and families work toward meeting the school's goals.
 - The school's Tiger Dollars incentive program reinforces high expectations for attendance, achievement and positive behavior. This initiative instills responsibility, integrity, caring and respect. Students receive Tiger Dollars when they attend Zero Hour tutoring sessions and as a reward for good behavior. They use their Tiger Dollars to purchase items of interest donated to the school's Tiger Store. This initiative has resulted in increased participation in early morning academic intervention sessions focused on improving student learning.
 - The school generates a monthly newsletter, offers Saturday workshops, and conducts annual school-wide events, such as Prevention Week, to promote parental involvement. Additionally, these activities increase community awareness and provide opportunities for families to participate in decision-making, which results in collaborative planning for school improvement.
- School leaders effectively engage the school community in establishing goals, which lead to a shared commitment thereby positively impacting learning outcomes.
 - The school leadership team participates in an annual spring retreat to set goals and action plans focused on accelerating student learning and promoting social-emotional growth based on the needs of the school. The goals and action plans are incorporated into the Comprehensive Education Plan as well as other school plans that address school safety, guidance, attendance and academic intervention programs. For example, the school looks at daily attendance to identify students who miss school regularly. School leaders set specific goals and incentives to address persistent attendance problems, particularly for overage students. Data gathered by school leaders indicate that the school is making progress toward meeting goals to improve overall attendance.
- A wide range of partnerships successfully promote students' personal development and academic growth so that students succeed in meeting their learning goals.
 - Guidance counselors and deans work closely with teachers to support their efforts in promoting positive student discipline. In addition, some teachers participate in two study groups that are supported by outside consultants to enhance their understanding of the social and emotional development of middle school students. As a result, student suspensions and school disciplinary actions have decreased.
 - The school's partnerships with community-based organizations such as Ridgewood Beacon and 21st Century programs enhance the school's offerings during the day and after school. Students benefit from tutoring and referral services, and participate in high-interest extracurricular activities such as karate, computers, sports activities and conflict resolution. The school community agrees that these programs have a measurable positive impact on students' academic and social development. For example, an increasing number of students register and participate in school activities, which contribute toward building their self-esteem and developing positive attitudes toward school, as measured by fewer discipline incidents.

- Students and their families deeply appreciate the school's focused efforts in creating a safe and respectful environment that promotes learning and supports their needs.
 - The school's hallways and bulletin boards prominently display student work, highlight student accomplishments and reflect a safe and respectful environment conducive to learning. A student stated, "The principal and the teachers work hard to make sure that students follow the discipline code so that our school is safe for us to learn and grow."
 - The school is divided into three academies, each with a dedicated staff which includes an assistant principal, dean and guidance counselor, that know all of their students well. The students greatly appreciate the positive rapport they have with the staff and the personal attention they receive to support their learning. Parents of grade 6 students are grateful for the smooth transition the academy provides for their children, which helps students better acclimate to the middle school setting.
- School leaders and faculty use a range of relevant data to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the performance of individuals and groups of students so that school decisions address identified strengths and challenges.
 - The supervisory cabinet uses data from multiple sources such as ARIS, occurrence reports, attendance summaries, and safety meetings, to understand clearly the strengths and needs of the school. They use various charts and graphs that are very effective in providing specific information about student academic achievement, attendance patterns, student suspensions and school incidents. For example, the suspension data assists the school in identifying individual students who engage in repeated infractions. The school addresses these findings by assigning a guidance counselor or other adults to support the social development of these students. The school shares the information with the community so that they are familiar with the strengths, challenges and overall school trends.
 - Teachers supplement English language arts (ELA), math, NYSESLAT, science and social studies summative data with information generated from item skills analysis and baseline assessments. Teachers use the data to group students according to their ELA and math levels. As a result, most classes arrange students in three groups and assign academic tasks identified as low, medium and high level activities to address each group's academic performance.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish a rigorous curriculum across all subjects and grades so that all students are engaged and challenged.
 - The school uses curriculum maps in ELA and math, and subject area scope and sequence guides to plan and implement standards-based lessons. However, the school's work on curriculum mapping is evolving. For example, the alignment and rigor of content skills, assessment, and essential questions vary across grades and subjects. In addition, the specific needs of the school's subgroups are not reflected in the plans. As a result, curriculum maps and academic tasks do not consistently incorporate rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills for a variety of learners, to ensure that all students succeed.

- Promote consistency in the use of differentiated instructional strategies across the school to strategically meet the individual needs of all students.
 - Teaching practices are aligned with the school's beliefs that instruction needs to be differentiated to meet the needs of students. In most classes, academic tasks are planned for three groups according to performance levels. However, the instructional strategies and academic tasks are not always strategically differentiated, particularly for students with special needs and English language learners in general education settings. As a result, these students demonstrate uneven levels of engagement in lessons and some students are not fully challenged to meet their full potential and accelerate their learning.
- Utilize the observation process to consistently evaluate and improve classroom practice, inform performance evaluation decisions aligned with school goals and accelerate student learning.
 - School leaders offer recommendations for teachers to improve their instructional practice through observations. However, a common instructional lens and regular feedback to improve teaching are not consistent across grades and subjects. In addition, data such as student work products and classroom learning outcomes are not always taken into account when evaluating classroom instruction. This limits school leaders' ability to identify gaps in teaching that hinder student learning.
- Engage classroom teachers and teacher teams in creating and administering assessments aligned to key standards while utilizing formative assessments that are closely linked with the curriculum to positively impact on classroom instruction.
 - Teachers use ELA, math and NYSESLAT summative assessment results, ELA and math item analysis data, Acuity predictive data, and baseline data to identify student performance levels. However, teachers do not integrate ongoing formative assessment data into their daily practice. This limits their ability to pinpoint the special needs of individual students and subgroups. As a result, instructional strategies and academic tasks are not always strategically aligned with the needs of all students to ensure that they succeed in their learning.
- Establish systems to evaluate teacher team effectiveness and build leadership capacity so that current plans and practices are tailored to accelerate student learning.
 - School leaders and staff are in the process of developing systems to evaluate the work of teacher teams. They use tools such as Teacher Team Meeting Management templates to gather information related to the focus, agenda and next steps of the respective teams. However, school leaders are just starting to use the data to assess the collaborative inquiry work across the school. Consequently, the school's ability to provide feedback that targets improvements in the work of teacher teams and builds leadership capacity is emerging.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: The Halsey School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		X		
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?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?		X		
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
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.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?		X		
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?		X		

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.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
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.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
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.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed