

# **Quality Review Report 2010-2011**

**School for Legal Studies**

**High School K477**

**850 Grand Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11211**

**Principal: Monica Ortiz**

**Dates of review: May 25<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Karen Watts**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

School for Legal Studies is a high school with 834 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 62% Black, 35% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Native American and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 79.9%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders carefully allocate resources across all facets of the school to support improvements in learning and to create a college going culture.
  - The school offers double periods of math and English language arts in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade so that students can receive individualized instruction. Students are programmed to Regents prep classes during the school day with selected teachers who can give them intensive academic supports to improve learning and the students' performance on the Regents exams.
  - The principal hired a college advisor who is increasing the school's efforts of creating a college going culture by holding college fairs, parent workshops, running the college office and taking students on college trips. These activities increase students' awareness of academic expectations in college and translate to improvements in learning while in high school.
- The school provides a supportive environment that allows effective teaching and learning to take place and for students to contribute to the improvement of the school.
  - The school's guidance and security departments work collaboratively to provide strong supports to address students' socio-emotional development. The Electronic Device and Uniform policies are consistently enforced. Hall sweeps are consistently conducted. All students are assigned to a staff member in the guidance department with whom they are able to meet with regularly ensuring that the focus is kept on academics and improvements in student performance. Through the student government, students participate in making decisions around the Kolour Blind program to end discrimination, and the successful Family Fun Day that promote a sense of belonging leading to improvements in their academics. In addition, the Law Week program, including the moot court, help students to further explore their interest in the study of law thereby improving scholarship in law related courses.
- Administrators monitor teaching practices, and provide support and feedback to teachers to make effective teacher evaluation decisions leading to improvements in teacher effectiveness.
  - Teachers have regular opportunities to reflect on their growth and set goals. The cabinet meets weekly to discuss the performances of teachers who were observed. The principal and assistant principals provide feedback through the informal and formal observation processes that have resulted in improvements in teacher effectiveness. Teachers who fail to show improvements in pedagogy despite professional development in the use of various instructional strategies, such as differentiated instruction, are appropriately rated and discontinued.
- Teachers are encouraged to own their learning through participation in a variety of professional development opportunities leading to significant improvements in teacher quality and student academic performance.

- Teachers are surveyed each school year to determine what supports they need and they are then matched to appropriate professional development opportunities either at the school or by the network to improve teacher quality and consequently student performance. As part of a school wide initiative, the staff has participated in professional development around backwards planning which has resulted in the creation of curricula plans that focus on an all-encompassing goal that is scaffolded to target smaller concepts and provide additional supports for student learning.
- The principal and cabinet support teacher leadership with teachers leading all common planning and inquiry teams that impact pedagogical decision-making particularly at the classroom level resulting in improvements in student learning. Teachers also lead and turnkey professional development for their peers.
- An extensive range of programs enhance the staff's capacity to support students and provide varied opportunities for personal growth and academic development of the students.
  - Staff members attend a discipline institute to prepare them to assist students with behavioral issues and prevent student issues from affecting the learning process leading to classroom environments that support improvements in teaching and learning and increases in students' academic performance.
  - Strategic partnerships with a number of organizations support both the academic and socio-emotional growth of students. The long standing Leadership Program on the campus offers cheerleading, dance and music and the ENACT Program leads the charge against all types of bullying, thereby creating a safer learning environment. The Justice Resource Center offers programs for students such as the Moot Court and mock trials that support their performance in law classes.

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

- Identify key standards to emphasize in the school wide curriculum that will increase students' achievement and college and career readiness by engaging more students in each lesson.
  - While the staff collaborates on curriculum writing, the school is now developing a standard tool that can make this work more organized and effective. As such, the school fails to identify key standards that will make students better ready for college level work.
  - Although efforts have been made to redesign curriculum and academic tasks based on data from assessments and student work, they have not yet resulted in the engagement of all students in their work resulting in lower than expected academic outcomes.
- Align instructional practices across all classrooms to ensure that lessons are sufficiently differentiated resulting in improvements in student work and performance.

- Efforts to incorporate differentiated instruction particularly with student use of technology such as laptops and clickers have afforded more students access to the curriculum but deeper work is needed to produce desired results in student learning.
- Differentiated lessons in some classrooms have resulted in improvements in student engagement and learning particularly where Bloom's Taxonomy Framework is used. However, this is only now becoming an embedded practice across all classrooms in the school.
- Established systems and structures for evaluating how data is aggregated and organized and how performance data is shared with students and families so that they can receive timely feedback of student performance.
  - Although the school uses an online grade reporting system to aggregate and share data, both parents and students report that it is only now being fully used by all faculty members thereby limiting timely communication with students and parents and negatively affecting student outcomes. Without structures that regularly evaluate the effectiveness of these practices, the school struggles to make timely adjustments as needed.
- Increase the level of data analysis among teachers so that results gained drive instruction to address the needs and strengthen the abilities of all students and target groups of students in all content areas.
  - Teachers work to revise the tasks that students are asked to complete in class by looking at periodic assessment results. Some teacher teams closely analyze student work, uniform unit exam results and mock Regents results in addition to data from periodic assessments to understand student performance levels. However, the practice of examining various sources of data to identify the strengths and deficits for all students and subgroups of students is not an embedded practice throughout the school. As a result, instructional practices are not appropriately meeting the unique needs of all students through purposefully selected instructional strategies and academic tasks.
- Ensure that teachers and teams are using classroom level data to set long and short term differentiated learning goals for groups of students as needed to accelerate student learning.
  - Teacher teams and classroom teachers set goals for groups of students based on data from summative and periodic assessments. However, efforts are now being made to set and modify goals based on data coming from the review of student work products and uniform unit exams that provide more accurate information on student progress that will accelerate student mastery of the curriculum and the rate of student learning.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

|   |           |          |          |           |
|---|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>School name: School for Legal Studies</b>  | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
| <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>  | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
| 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>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>   | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
| 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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?   |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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>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>  | <b>UD</b>             | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b>          | <b>WD</b> |                   |           |                       |
| 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?   |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 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?   |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?   |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?  |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| <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>   | <b>UD</b>             | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b>          | <b>WD</b> |                   |           |                       |
| 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? |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?  |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 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?        |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 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?  |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| <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>   | <b>UD</b>             | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b>          | <b>WD</b> |                   |           |                       |
| 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?  |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 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?                               |                       | <b>X</b> |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
| 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?   |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| 5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?  |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| <b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>  |                       |          |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
| <b>UD</b>  | <b>Underdeveloped</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>Developing</b> | <b>P</b>  | <b>Proficient</b> | <b>WD</b> | <b>Well Developed</b> |