

# **Quality Review Report 2010-2011**

**School for Democracy and Leadership**

**Middle-High School 533**

**600 Kingston Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11203**

**Principal: Rebecca Ostro**

**Dates of review: February 10 – 11, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Gwen Stephens**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The School for Democracy and Leadership is a middle-high school with 435 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 92% Black, 6% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009- 2010 was 93.7%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school's organizational decisions strategically align to school-wide instructional goals and responds to meet the needs of all students.
  - Thoughtful and innovative organizational decisions and strategic allocation of staff are reflected in the school schedule. Teacher and student time is aligned to school-wide, grade, and individual student goals. Advisories, teacher team meetings, enrichment, and intervention instruction occur during the regular school day. As a result of these decisions, students are receiving necessary time and instruction, which translates to 64% four year and 100% six year graduation rates.
  - The school's effective use of resources provided by the partnership with CAMBA, (friend in Bolivian culture), include three full time staff, an adolescent literacy program, a college institute for advance students, and intervention programs for at-risk 9<sup>th</sup> graders. As a result, academic support is embedded into the daily school program thus ensuring a commitment to student access and success.
- Administrators and teachers work cohesively in collecting and examining a wide range of data to monitor school level needs, performance trends, and create academic interventions that improve student outcomes.
  - The school's use of multiple-data summative resources including State and City accountability data to determine areas of strengths is an embedded practice of teacher teams and administrators throughout the school. The results of the various assessments are cross-referenced by an additional data team to create an accurate profile of school level progress, and match instructional decisions to improve student outcomes in core subject areas.
  - Data from the guidance counselor and the attendance officer, combined with data from the social workers and teacher advisory teams, serves as tools for evaluating school-wide polices. Consequently, the school revamped the student cohorts and redesigned their classes. These changes have led to increased opportunities for credit-recovery, and tutorials resulting in higher graduation and weighted Regents' pass rates.
- School leaders support a common instructional focus and establish effective systems of monitoring teacher practice in order to improve student learning and achievement outcomes.
  - The principal is a strong instructional leader who with the support of coaches provides support for staff based on teachers' informal and formal observations. Extensive advice is given to teachers via feedback sheets during informal de-briefs. This practice defines the instructional expectations and supports the development and sharing of a common instructional focus across the school, leading to continuous improvement in practice.

- The principal and coaches utilize information gathered from observations and student data to make decisions regarding individualized professional development options, intervisitations, and mentoring by other teachers. A reassignment of high school teachers to specific grades within their content area further supports teacher development and improvement in classroom practice.
- The principal's clear vision is communicated to the entire school community and is the basis for driving efforts to accelerate student learning and sustain high levels of growth for the future.
  - School-level goal setting is determined by current data, responds to the needs of the students, and underscores the primary school goals of a rigorous academic and positive learning environment. All goals, including principal's goals, teacher, grade, and class goals, the Comprehensive Educational Plan goals, and action plans, reflect the focus of the primary goals. This alignment promotes successful progress towards the school's vision.
  - This year the school maintains its goal of 100% college-bound with a new college readiness program that is interwoven into the advisory program and is sustained throughout the four years of high school. As a result, students are encouraged to keep in mind the long-term goal of graduation and college acceptance.
- School leaders and faculty design engaging, and rigorous coherent curricula, including the arts, that emphasize links to key State standards thus ensuring that students develop skills and deepen their knowledge.
  - The principal and her team guide the development of curriculum maps and unit plans across grades and content areas. The focus of this work, two mastery projects and mastery exams in each subject area, serve as anchors for the grade 6-12 curricula. The mastery projects, aligned to State and the Common Core Standards, continually increase in rigor, and emphasize higher order thinking skills as the curriculum spirals up the grades and have enabled the school to implement a school-wide grading policy incorporating the mastery work as 65% of a student's grade. As a result, by aligning the grading policy with the mastery work, each content area curriculum reflects the understanding of what students need to know and must accomplish. This effectively leads to purposeful decision making around content and increased accountability relative to students passing of Regents, and earning and/or recovering credits to graduate.
- Subject and grade teams participate in collaborative inquiry and view this practice as integral to leveraging classroom practice in response to achieving the school's instructional goals.
  - Every teacher in the school serves collaboratively on multiple teams, including grade teams, department teams, and advisories. Team leaders lead data-driven discussions, and drive inquiry work and act as liaisons between grade teams and the leadership team to ensure actionable data analysis. Department chair people meet regularly to assess curriculum alignment, review grade pass rates, and are responsible for the revision of curriculum mapping and alignment of the mastery projects. This strategic teamwork throughout the school ensures a consistent focus on

the elements of curriculum and instructional coherence to increase student achievement.

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

- Develop greater coherence and consistency in differentiated instruction based on data so that lessons offer multiple entry points for all learners and opportunities for higher levels of engagement.
  - Although many teachers differentiate instruction, this is not yet a consistent practice across all classes. Some teachers articulate learning styles, and are using data analysis to meet the needs of students in their classes. However, this practice is inconsistent and teachers' lesson plans are generic, and do not reflect utilizing information consistently to select instructional strategies for multiple entry leading to increased levels of engagement.
- Deepen teachers' expertise in the use of formative assessments and classroom level data to ensure that teachers understand individual students' needs and employ adjustment daily to support targeted instruction.
  - Currently, the school uses teacher teams to look at classroom level data. Teachers also use formative assessment data to support instructional decisions. However, there is not sufficient uniformity in the alignment of the various assessments such as Acuity, with formative data across the school, or specific expectations regarding teacher proficiency in using this data to inform instruction. Only 14.5% of middle school students were proficient in levels 3 and 4 on the 2010 State assessment in English language arts.
- Strengthen systems to regularly evaluate and adjust the data systems and process for sharing performance data with students and families.
  - Students and families are able to articulate information about their academic progress through use of tools provided by the school. The Middle School Paycheck system and Weekly Academic Progress report provide a way to monitor progress. Teachers also use TeachEase for inputting grades and small portions of students use this on-line data system to review grades while a few parents use ARIS. Both students and families feel that the systems used to provide progress data are not always available or aligned so that everyone has opportunities to access them to provide clarity on next steps.
- Embed specific measurable interim- and long-term goals to measure growth and evaluate the success of teacher teams at regular intervals in order to further the capacity building at the school.
  - A network of teacher teams meets on a regular basis and there is some monitoring of the teams' progress via the principal attending team meetings and reporting from team leaders. Currently, this practice is insufficient to evaluate the impact of teams. Use of indicators of progress at regular intervals, does not occur at a rate needed to build the capacity of teams and leaders to meet the targeted goals of the 6-12 students' college bound performance.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

<b>School name: School for Democracy and Leadership</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>