



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Division of Performance and Accountability
2010-2011**

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Nathan Straus Preparatory School of Humanities

Elementary – Middle School 140

**123 Ridge Street
New York
NY 10002**

Principal: Esteban J. Barrientos

Dates of review: April 12 - 13, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Daniella Phillips

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Nathan Straus Preparatory School of Humanities is an elementary and middle school with 420 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 17% Black, 76% Hispanic, 1% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 91.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders prioritize the observation of classroom teaching with frequent and constructive feedback and professional development that strengthens teaching practices.
 - The principal and assistant principal work effectively as a team in observing classes in progress, offering cogent written and verbal feedback, in turn, adjusting professional development to support next steps. Administrators have adopted a common checklist for walk-through observations which affords teachers immediate instructional feedback and reinforces school-wide expectations. This year's focus on struggling learners has led to meaningful staff development about working productively with special education students and English language learners. Hiring and retention decisions are on-target with good analysis of student data.
- School leaders make well-informed and strategic organizational decisions that elevate coherence of practices.
 - Due to budget reductions, the school has eliminated a coach and two reading intervention positions. However, these losses are offset by a carefully-crafted schedule with longer periods of early morning extended day for students in need of academic intervention and an enriched music and arts program of two full-time teachers. As a result, all students engage broadly in performing arts, while those with special needs receive targeted small group instruction.
 - With a large middle school component, the school focuses on developing challenging programs for students at this level. For example, students cite the culminating academic task of exit projects in science and social studies as among their most challenging work. Seventh and eighth graders pursue original research with multiple sources and present findings orally, in writing, and by designing poster or electronic boards. These guided research assignments push students to higher levels of thinking.
- The school is a safe place with comprehensive supports for all students to develop as respectful, confident learners.
 - There is widespread agreement among teachers, parents, and students that this is a safe and positive school culture. Students treat both human interactions and physical property with respect. Students celebrate academic attainment of honor roll, performing arts and sports accomplishments, and frequent community service. Furthermore, students take care of their physical environment by honoring the open art gallery showcasing recent student photography and walking gently by the paper mache models of Egyptian sarcophagi outside the sixth grade humanities class.
 - School leaders plan deliberately small class sizes at the elementary school level and a daily advisory/elective program at the middle school level in order to ensure each student is well known and supported by staff. Two full-time guidance counselors work productively with teachers and students. As a result, students' interactions across grade levels are positive.

- School leaders and faculty convey high expectations for academic achievement and personal development, and parents engage in support of school improvement.
 - All major stakeholders—staff, parents, and students—are aware of key academic priorities, including the push to meet State targets as an identified “School In Need of Improvement (SINI)-Year 1.” With clear communications around school priorities, school leaders model the need for continuous growth. This year, the student attendance rate is 92.6%, which is 1.1% higher than last year’s average. In addition, students readily understand, via individual conferences with teachers about expected performance on upcoming State tests in reading and math and their path to high school and beyond.
 - There are strong parent leaders in place on the Parent Teacher Association and School Leadership Team who support and have a direct hand in school decisions. For example, this year parents proposed and the school has implemented a clothing uniform requirement for all grades. Parents considered the issue, supported the initiative with incentives and a fashion show, and have reviewed what worked well earlier in the year and what has not.
- Students benefit greatly from effective guidance and youth development resources that meet their social and emotional needs.
 - Staff meets and plans effectively to address students’ social and emotional learning, in addition to academic progress. This year, several teachers focused their inquiry work on implementing a “Stars to Success” program across the school that promotes responsibility and other shared community values. As a result, teachers receive meaningful professional development from colleagues and guidance counselors about how to nurture a positive learning environment. In addition, school partnerships with corporations and community based organizations offer high caliber counseling, college preparation, and after school support to children and families.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen consistency of planning rigorous academic tasks across content areas within curriculum maps.
 - Recent efforts to revise curriculum maps in reading, writing and test prep are a good start, but require more time and collaborative work to make sense across grade levels and subjects. Across many classrooms, there are insufficient planned examples of altering texts, assignments, and extensions to challenge students at all levels. A notable exception was a lesson which included graphic organizers, exemplar poem, and a video performance as support strategies, while the teacher elicited extension work from several students. More work is needed to ensure curricular and instructional decisions increase consistency of higher order thinking and learning in all classes.
- Communicate clear expectations around the teaching practices of differentiation to maximize student learning.
 - Several lessons feature effective small group learning, including sixth grade poetry writing and third grade poem discussion. In these classes, students’

verbal and written participation reach uniformly high levels. However, many class lessons, materials, and assessments are planned for whole class delivery, which limits opportunities for differentiation. Lessons do not consistently provide multiple entry points for students to engage fully. School leaders are beginning to formulate a vision for instruction that promotes student interaction and critical thinking. Without defined expectations, teachers cannot be sure what acceptable pedagogy looks like.

- Improve the consistency of teachers gathering and assessing student work together to better identify strengths and needs of students across grades and subgroups.
 - Teachers and school leaders rely heavily on assessments from particular vendors, including Acuity periodic assessments, Teachers' College reading and writing units of study, and math assessments from *Every Day* or *Impact* math. While there is adequate alignment between these assessments and curricular decisions, there is an absence of teacher-developed assessments that link to humanities.
 - Teachers review student work at grade team and inquiry meetings. A middle school inquiry team, for example, effectively calibrates their scoring of current events summaries by looking together at the students' written work. However, teachers miss important opportunities to meet and do this work across grade levels, thereby limiting teachers' understanding of what students know and can do from grade to grade.
- Develop and track more precisely goals for struggling and high performing students to accelerate their progress with improved teacher feedback.
 - Teachers utilize common assessments including reading level inventories, math end-of-unit quizzes, and on-demand writing assessments. At times, this data leads to goals for specific subgroups, such as English language learners, but this rarely occurs for higher achieving students and students who are repeating a grade. Students at the upper and lower ends of academic performance lag in progress compared with other students, yet there is not careful tracking to better monitor their achievement.
 - There is a developing practice of teachers providing useful feedback on student work with compliments and suggestions for next steps. These glow and grow comments appear with increasing frequency in students' work folders and on bulletin boards., although a good number lack sufficient detail to advance students' learning in significant ways.
- Expand structures to track students' progress and better communicate with families about next steps in students' learning.
 - School leaders and teachers are pro-active in studying State and common core standards to challenge all students. Current grading and assessment practices and reporting cycles need adjustment and better consistency. Parents receive three report cards in grades K-5 or four report cards in grades 6-8 each year with no interim progress reports. These reports offer limited and delayed information about students' performance and behavior. Staff intends to pilot an electronic grade book for middle school students, a promising initiative to facilitate parents' support of student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Nathan Straus Preparatory School PS/MS 140	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