

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Manhattan Theatre Lab

High School 283

**122 Amsterdam Avenue
New York
NY 10023**

Principal: Evelyn Collins

Dates of review: February 7 - 8, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Elaine Gorman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Manhattan Theatre Lab is a high school with 393 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 49% Black, 47% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Native American, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 35% of the students enrolled and girls account for 65%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 81.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- A cohesive administrative team makes intentional hiring and programming decisions aligned to the learning needs of students and increasing expectations for college readiness.
 - A newly hired assistant principal for science and security ensures a robust sequence of courses in the sciences that provides students with the preparation for college, and an “environment of learning” where students are in class and attending to their studies. The school has already seen a reduction in disciplinary infractions and an incremental increase in attendance. Parents speak about the importance of science and students indicate that their interest in science has grown this year.
 - After reviewing scholarship reports and Regents’ test items, changes in programming to meet the needs of excelling students and those falling behind, include additional advanced placement courses, and support to build numeracy, literacy, and content skills. Students with special needs receive additional programming based on their skill development.
- Teams of teachers consistently administer common diagnostic and unit assessments to create a better understanding of students’ strengths and needs and further the development of differentiated strategies.
 - Teacher teams in all content areas are developing pre- and post-unit assessments in each class to track student’s areas of strength and need. Team collaborations focus on strategies for reteaching and effective use of resources, with an eye towards students who need additional assistance, as well as to develop cross-content connections to reinforce skill development. Individual teachers employ strategies learned through these focused collaborations, resulting in a greater number of students earning course credit during first semester, as well as embedding continuity of practice across the school.
- A majority of the staff support a common instructional focus reinforced through the work of teacher teams resulting in differentiated goals and strategies for students.
 - The school community is committed to having each child excel in academics and the arts. Staff are focused on students graduating high school; and increasingly, they are preparing them for college. Through teams and individually, data is reviewed and strategic student groupings are determined, with differentiated goals and supports. Team collaboration, opportunities through the Children’s First Network, coaching from network staff, and external professional development, as requested by teachers, is assisting staff in improving their craft as evidenced in several classrooms with emerging best practices.
- Students and parents appreciate the individualized support in academics, arts, and social development.

- Consistently students speak about the accessibility of staff members to help them achieve in their classes or “just be there” if they need to discuss a personal issue. Students report that they have multiple opportunities to improve their work, which results in their receiving higher grades as evidenced in scholarship reports.
- Students involved in theatre and their parents speak highly of the principal in the success of students. They commend her work in directing school productions and the respectful tone in the school, as evident in the quality of school performances and the increasing interest of students in doing well in the school.
- Substantial partnerships extend students’ application of concepts, skills, and behaviors and supports staff in developing a positive social environment.
 - The school community receives training in the Respect for All program and members model inclusive and respectful behavior for students that extends out to student interactions and behavior. Students report that while there are groups of students that “hang together”, there are not the cliques that exist in other schools, and the incidences of “bullying” are less than in other schools they attended.
 - Visiting artists, partnerships with Lincoln Center, New York City Ballet, and the Apollo Theatre, as well as college programs such as City University of New York’s Scholars program enable students to extend their classroom experiences in academics and the arts and is resulting in an increasing number of students attending four-year colleges.

What the school needs to improve

- Build on emerging models of curriculum by refining the identification of key standards and consistently emphasizing rigor across subjects and grades.
 - Curriculum maps and pacing calendars guide instruction in content areas, with alignment to current State standards and some consideration of emerging standards. The identification of key standards is based on student performance on required assessments, but less so on major concepts. Further, most curriculum documents do not include key cognitive standards across grades and subjects, which limits curriculum alignment throughout the school. Additionally, while there are some emerging models of curriculum with examples of rigorous tasks, these remain substantially uneven, which further limits students’ ability to make cross-content connections and apply learning to complex tasks.
- Build on consistent classroom structures to raise the level of active engagement for all students evidenced in oral and written work.
 - In several content areas, recently written teacher handbooks articulate expectations for lesson development. Additionally, teachers consistently use data to develop groupings, with some differentiation of resources or assignments. Although in most classrooms rubrics guide students, in many lessons, the level of questioning is too low and tasks assigned lack sufficient rigor. As a result, students compliantly participate but less often

actively engage, limiting their ability to make new meaning and apply learning. Most students report that they could do harder work.

- Embed focused, short-term goals and a multi-year plan of action to support student learning, with input by all constituencies of the school community.
 - Goals listed in the Comprehensive Educational Plan and the Principal's Performance Review show alignment, but this is not extended to other documents that focus on goal setting. Additionally, although data informs year-to-year goals, this practice is not evident in an articulated long-term action plan. This results in fluctuating outcomes and a lack of clear direction for future school improvement.
 - Parents receive regular newsletters and outreach to a group of parents whose children are active in theatre performances is evident. However, most parents have limited opportunities to provide input into school decisions or fully understand school improvement efforts, thus leading to difficulties in establishing an active parent association or school leadership team.
- Develop teacher capacity in the inquiry process and further the role of teacher leaders to enhance the work of teacher teams.
 - Although all teachers participate collaboratively in teams and make group decisions about department and classroom practices, the use of inquiry is not a school-wide embedded practice. Thus, the ability to leverage new insights into student achievement, and the measurement of impact of agreed-upon instructional strategies is significantly limited.
 - Teachers report that team recommendations help inform school decisions, and although teacher leaders are not specifically identified, teacher voice is emerging. However, a structure for distributed leadership, and opportunities to meet as an instructional team are not yet consistently evident, thus hindering the mentoring of teacher leaders and the embedding of best practices across the school.
- Evaluate and revise curricular, instructional and teacher development decisions in response to student needs and evolving State standards.
 - Time is allocated for teachers to work in teams on curricular and instructional development leading to some evidence of good work, including some review of emerging State standards. However, less attention is given to developing structures for revising curriculum and instructional practice to substantially align to rigorous standards, limiting development of a timeline for completion of this important work. Further, there is not yet sufficient identification of professional development needed to support students in mastery of standards.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Manhattan Theatre Lab	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