

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Norman Thomas High School

High School 620

**111 East 33rd Street
Manhattan
NY 10016**

Principal: Philip M. Martin Jr.

Dates of review: October 27 – 29, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Eileen R. Waters

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Norman Thomas is a high school with 1,763 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 27% Black, 67% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 70.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school provides staff with professional support from a variety of partnerships to effectively address the diverse social and emotional needs of their population resulting in personal growth of students.
 - The school's previous experience of violence and physical harm among students motivated the new principal to seek out support from the network to provide teachers with suitable support around strategies to address the emotional needs of students. As a result, the culture of the building has taken on a more positive tone as noted in conversations with students, parents, and staff members.
 - External partnerships address concerns of teen pregnancy, conflict mediation, and college preparation. Additionally, students are offered counseling and tutoring services to address their social, emotional, and academic needs. Partnerships with New York University and Educate Online bring technology into the school and provide laptops to students for at-home tutoring. Consequently, students respect each other, make better choices for themselves, are preparing for college, and benefit from additional supports provided outside of school.
- School leadership continues to strengthen the culture of the building among the different members of the school community resulting in increased motivation of students' desire to succeed.
 - The shifting tone of the building represents a learning environment where teachers are gradually developing as instructional leaders and guidance counselors are developing in their ability to identify and create a plan for students at risk. Thus, a professional culture is growing throughout the school as teachers' work together addressing students' needs more deeply.
 - Students' strong desire is a catalyst for them reaching their potential and is supported by their developing voice within the school community. Therefore, students feel comfortable requesting support from administrators and working collaboratively with teachers to be successful. Counselors from Harlem Center for Education, an external partnership, work with students around college counseling providing opportunities for students to attend college to attain career goals.
- Deliberate organizational decisions by the leadership foster the current instructional transition, equipping the school with valuable resources to concentrate on learning needs.
 - The school's reorganization into three small learning communities, media and technology, business, and English language support, allows students to attend classes with a group of academy teachers all housed on the same floor. In addition, a fourth academy provides successful outreach to over-age, under credited students. Consequently, teachers can meet on a daily basis to look at instructional practice thus cultivating a stronger collaboration among each academy's teachers and staff.

- In response to students' instructional needs, the principal has made key changes to the school's organization. A reallocation to the science department now includes sufficient number of teachers to provide Earth Science, and reallocation of administrative positions now supports the school's academy structure. This is resulting in a team of staff members appropriately scheduled to work directly on addressing and improving students' academic deficits.
- The spectrum of pedagogy in the school allows some students to partake in engaging, differentiated learning experiences, suitably challenging them to produce meaningful work products.
 - While most students receive direct instruction with little opportunity to engage actively in their work, repeating math students noted the benefit of having two teachers in their collaboratively taught class. They are thus able to retain and apply the content successfully through the additionally support, leading to mastery of skills. In a self-contained social studies class, the teacher paced her questioning to keep the sequential flow of historical events moving and the students actively engaged. Students in a virtual enterprise class engage in relevant activities around learning to run a virtual corporation thus learning job-readiness and academic skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Align the school's instructional plan to ensure an engaging and rigorously challenging curriculum that addresses all student needs.
 - Although there is a basic structure to the overall organization of curriculum, the school does not yet embed ongoing academic tasks to challenge students' high order thinking skills, apply rigor to learning tasks, or focus on key standards, in order to prepare students for college and leverage academic performance. While the school is learning the various learning styles of students, the lack of diversified learning tasks embedded within the curriculum leaves students under-challenged and disengaged.
- Develop the ongoing practice of collecting and analyzing data so that trends, strengths, and areas of need, can be identified and incorporated in classroom level decisions.
 - Periodic assessments are not provided on a regular basis and the uneven use of rubrics provides minimal data on students' ability to meet State standards. The lack of well-focused assessments hinders staff from identifying performance levels for individuals and groups of students, thus limiting instructional decisions to address students' deficits and strengths.
- Develop specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART) goals based on valid data for all students so that all constituents are accountable for meeting student's individual needs.
 - Department goals and academy goals focus on the new Regents, content vocabulary, and trends in student writing. Students can articulate basic goals needed to pass their class or Regents, but SMART goal setting is not a common practice among students and teachers. Teachers use

70% proficiency as a measure to identify student mastery or those in need of reteaching. However, the lack of goal setting for individuals or groups of students precludes the ability to attend to student's unique needs.

- English teachers' gathering of data on student's reading levels provided them with valuable information regarding students' reading three levels below grade. Although this data was gathered, there is no continuation of its use, thus content area teachers, librarians, and students do not reference this data in order to advance student learning.
- Incorporate a more precise inquiry approach in to professional collaborations so that the analysis of student data drives a change in instruction resulting in a positive impact on student learning.
 - Although teachers engage in professional collaborations with their academy and departments, it is not from an inquiry approach. Discussions focus around the work of an individual teacher and/or student not directly connected to all constituents at the meeting. With the inquiry approach missing, teachers struggle to identify a common need in a group of students through data, develop an instructional strategy to leverage change, and identify an assessment to adequately measure student outcomes.
- Institute effective feedback structures in order to provide teachers with clear expectations of classroom practice.
 - The new academy structure has increased the visibility of administration in classrooms who have begun using a snapshot approach to generate feedback to teachers. However, formal written feedback is often untimely, limited to management or general instructional advice, or inconsistent, resulting in unclear expectations to teachers about how practice should develop in their classrooms.
 - During a voluntary summer institute, professional development was provided on classroom management and differentiation of instruction. The effectiveness of these initiatives has yet to be measured, reassessed, and further developed. Currently, professional development initiatives are developing for the entire staff and targeted supports for individual teachers have not been identified.
- Create clear systems to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and practices in the use of student data to ensure targeted support in classrooms for all students.
 - Currently, systems to regularly evaluate assessment practices and tools, and communicate progress with students and parents are not in place. In the absence of this routine, data use to drive instruction has been stagnant impacting deficiently on instructional practice and student advancement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Norman Thomas High 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