



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Law, Government & Community Service

Magnet High School

Q494

**207-01 116TH Avenue
Cambria Heights, Queens
NY 11411**

Principal: Donna Delfyett-White

Dates of review: May 23 - 24, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Ron Feinstein

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Law, Government and Community Service is a high school with 531 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 80% Black, 14% Hispanic, 1% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 86.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions across many aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
 - An interdisciplinary class in law that was introduced this year responded to assessed challenges of levels 1 and 2 students. A creative writing class, Achieve 3000 and Saturday academy regents prep were funded despite losing a grant. Alignment of resources to instructional goals was maintained, responding to students' learning needs.
 - All teachers are programmed for credit recovery in their content area at least once a day, sharing responsibility for meeting the needs of the most challenged cohort. By consolidating programs, students get credit immediately in the following semester while content is still fresh.
- The school uses a wide range of assessment data to monitor school-level needs and progress, resulting in modifications for increased outcomes.
 - School leaders and faculty use Periodic Assessment item skills analyses in mathematics and literacy to supplement data from regents and the entering cohort's data. Strengths and areas of need are effectively surfaced, resulting in timely identification of at-risk students.
 - Classroom level data gathered and analyzed by the mathematics department uncovered that bottom third students were weak in all content areas. This resulted in school-wide change through the formation of a math lab class, the adoption of Achieve 3000 and an equivalent literacy lab class, positively impacting student progress.
- The school has established a systematic approach to gather, analyze and use data, resulting in strong insights into student achievement trends.
 - ARIS is effectively used for creating and organizing data through special charts for progress tracking of the lowest third students. The school further developed a specific tool for examining data for the entering cohort, resulting in timely creation of credit recovery courses.
 - Teacher teams with the Assistant Principal, conduct item analyses and examine scholarship reports to identify trends and patterns in student performance that are used for curricular and instructional decisions. This work revealed two major concerns: reading in the content areas and the teaching of Global and U.S. History, which resulted in decisions to provide additional teacher planning time and support in these areas.
- The school engages in effective communication with parents and students, focusing on college and career readiness.

- Parents appreciate a school report card received at the start of each marking period. Teachers complete a content specific section reflecting on students' progress. Parents also receive information from PTA and school leadership team meetings via an automatic phoning system and are offered regents and SAT informational meetings. This outreach is welcomed by the large number of families of first generation college-bound students, resulting in informed parental support for achievement.
- The school uses an Internet based program that generates letters to families every three weeks, initiating reciprocal and on-going conversations with all constituents. The reports provide academic records and current transcripts integrating student data from multiple sources including guidance and college readiness, allowing for parents to be informed partners for success.
- Student achievement and success is a renewed central focus for the school community and ensured by progress monitoring at all levels.
 - School leaders' efforts for involving faculty in new directions include attention to Acuity periodic assessment data that resulted in creation of an English electives class and adoption of Achieve 3000 school-wide. Initially focused on ninth graders, this initiative has been broadened to include the school's lowest third, positively impacting credit accumulation and progress towards meeting school-wide goals.
 - Some teacher teams and departments use teacher made assessments, Acuity data and regents item analysis to track progress and adjust goals. The math department identified a wide knowledge gap with a targeted group of lowest third students, resulting in the decision to enlist additional content support for teachers to meet the needs of this student group.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop greater curriculum coherence and alignment with an emphasis on selected key standards to ensure that all students make progress.
 - The school's understanding of how current state standards and Common Core Learning Standards align to the literacy and math curriculum is inconsistent. While the school has determined that a focus on informational writing and point of view is necessary, this focus remains insufficient to close the achievement gap and prepare college-ready students.
 - Teacher interpretations and understanding of rigor in all content areas is uneven and evidence of higher order skills in the classrooms is inconsistent. As a result, students are insufficiently challenged to develop critical thinking skills for college and career.
- Improve the consistency of the differentiation of classroom practices to provide appropriate challenge aligned to students' achievement levels.

- Some faculty is learning to differentiate activities and the administration works to move all teachers in this direction. Small groups of students are at work in some classes, but tasks, in most classrooms, are delivered to whole-class with few opportunities for conferencing, collaborative work or access to individual student products. Lack of a shared set of beliefs about how students learn best leaves most students unchallenged for success.
- Differentiated teaching strategies and classroom routines in reading and writing are inconsistent across the school. Most activities fail to engage students and capture their imagination, resulting in limited entry points for learning.
- Develop a cohesive system that aligns assessments and curriculum to support targeted instruction, resulting in rigorous tasks.
 - Teacher designed assessments lack rubrics that fairly address instruction and key standards. Therefore students perform poorly in class, but may pass regents. This contradiction highlights curricula and standards misalignment, limiting effectiveness of instruction and evaluation.
 - Teachers and teacher teams have begun looking at student work and other classroom data beyond Periodic assessments. However this emerging practice has yet to drive instructional modifications. Although professional development on differentiation that began this year resulted in more purposeful grouping in some classes, further training is needed to differentiate across content for rigorous task development.
- Ensure that all constituents are involved in setting goals that include high levels of challenge in order to accelerate student progress.
 - This year's focus on writing for college and synthesizing data in mathematics are joined with introducing differentiation and improving academic rigor with consultant help. However, a wider range of supports to deepen content and pedagogical knowledge of staff is not in place, hindering efforts to accelerate learning.
 - Current goal setting and action planning efforts led by the principal are informed by a surface understanding of data. Furthermore, targeted professional development on instructional practices that are implicit in the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards is lacking, hindering further development of the school.
- Implement a uniform protocol for observations as a common lens for collaborative reflection to elevate teaching practices across the school.
 - The principal has begun to establish a coherent school culture that is supported by the majority of constituents. However, evidence of practice from classroom visits is not aligned to the school's instructional focus, minimizing the ability to improve student outcomes.
 - The principal has made some proactive evaluation decisions. However, the observation checklist fails to capture evidence of practice, resulting in non-specific feedback that limits professional growth and reflection.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Law, Government & Community Service	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