

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Coalition for Social Change  
High School M409

2351 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue  
New York  
NY 10035

Principal: JOHN SULLIVAN

Dates of review: January 12-13, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Geri Taylor Brown

## Part 1: The school context

### **Information about the school**

Coalition School for Social Change is a High school with 406 students from grade 9 through grade12. The school population comprises 35% Black, 61% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 79.5%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders collect, examine and analyze student data to understand student learning needs and to provide leadership direction that supports academic achievement. (2.1)
  - The school's new principal is beginning to move the focus of staff members to "identifying gaps" and "pinpointing" student learning needs. Teachers are beginning to participate in a deeper examination of summative and formative assessment data to more clearly gauge student academic strengths and weaknesses. In addition, he provides staff with direct linkages between the assessment data and the schools' organizational practices. For example, the science curriculum team established clear criteria for determining which students would take the January 2012 Living Environment Regents. These guidelines were based on an analysis of each student's past and present assessment information. As a result, the principal states that there have been "small increases in the passing rates of classes" and consequently the school anticipates more students will pass the Regents.
- The school has established goals that are beginning to guide all stakeholders toward improving student learning. (3.1)
  - Students, staff and parents commonly shared the goal that the school is, as described by the principal, "developing a culture of learning." Parents agree that the school "tries to help everyone." This sentiment is also echoed by students who agreed with a classmate, who jokingly stated: "What teacher wants to see you again. They all want you to pass and move on." The evidence of this cultural shift can be heard in the usage of verbiage school-wide that references on going efforts to develop goals that support student success.
  - School leaders communicate the needs of the school to parents, teachers and students on the School Leadership Team (SLT). Parents are starting to play a large role as true partners to help move the school forward toward meeting its goals. For example, parents canvassed the neighborhood and secured multiple donations from local businesses to support school functions such as the multi-cultural festival. In addition, the parents are currently establishing ties with groups that can contribute more significant fiscal support, such as college scholarships. Parents of students across all grade levels agree with a new parent who stated, "I see *Coalition* going places in the next four years!" The results of these initiatives, along with knowledge of the goal setting and planning processes through the SLT, have been a steady increase in parental involvement in support of the school's new focus to prepare students for post-secondary skills.
- School leaders make organizational and instructional decisions around resources and teacher assignment and hiring practices that impact student outcomes. (1.3)
  - The English Department's Inquiry Team consistently meets every Monday to discuss student work aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. This team's membership includes English, special education and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teachers. These teachers excitedly shared successful instructional practices and discussed ways to improve student learning. As a result there is a new consistency in lesson plans. This can be seen in classroom visits where the flow of lessons and variety in some activities were familiar to students. This common practice has greatly boosted student engagement as evidenced in student participation in some classrooms.

- School leaders made marked changes to the teacher hiring process. The interview process for a recently hired science teacher included a group interview by colleagues, a demonstration lesson, and a joint staff and student de-briefing where stakeholders discussed the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. As a result of this more involved process, the new teacher was "up-to-speed" on the curriculum, well-versed in the knowledge of student learning needs and had developed a strong rapport with students and staff within a short period of time. In addition, his new hiring process empowered staff and students who state that they are more clearly connected to ensuring that their school has the "best" teachers.
- Staff members convey high expectations to students and families and offer support through recognition that impact academic and behavioral improvements. (3.4)
  - Staff and students feel a "new sense" of ownership in this school. The principal sets an example of high visibility through frequent school walkthroughs, and his presence during student arrival, lunch and dismissal. His actions encouraged staff members who took solid ownership over the implementation of "College Pride Day by Staff." This event showed students the undergraduate school accomplishments of staff and also served as an encouragement for future accomplishments by students. Students and parents echo the message that "college is for all students" throughout the school as well. Parents spoke highly of "Joan" the College Advisor, who has met with parents and children both in group settings and individually. In addition, the school enlisted the input of students from John Jay College who assist in processing student college applications. Parents, who volunteer in the school, state that they have seen a decrease in students cutting class and state that students link the importance of high school grades to college admission.
- The school is developing to provide a climate that supports student learning and promotes personal growth. (1.4)
  - Improving the school tone and climate continues to be a "work in progress" which is rendering incremental positive results. Students spoke excitedly about their weekly Advisor meeting. These Monday morning gatherings provide an environment where students and their advisor discuss current student academic and social actions and plans for the future. One student stated that advisory planning has made *Coalition* "The mission to success" for him and his classmates. In addition, non-pedagogical staff members have taken a renewed ownership of the school. Witnessing teachers in the hallways during the change of classes inspired office staff to join this effort. Students now have good, respectful working relationship with all staff who notifies parents about lateness and absenteeism. According, this is beginning to reflect an increase in overall student attendance.

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

- Provide teachers with a rigorous curriculum that offers learning opportunities for all students to succeed including high achievers. (1.1)
  - Teachers agreed that they are becoming more entrenched in both the selection and development of academic curriculum and learning tasks. However, these efforts are at the commencement stages. Classroom visits showed academic tasks that were not scaffolded and did not actively engage all students. For example, while students were seated in small groups in math, science and English classes, the activity was the same for each group and involved answering questions on a worksheet. As a result, students are not consistently

involved in challenging learning experiences and have not yet made sufficient improvements in learning as evidenced by results on the NYC School Progress Report.

- Refine the teacher observation system to directly link improved pedagogy with improved student outcomes. (4.1)
  - Staff is encouraged by the increased frequency of their classroom observations. Teachers stated that they had been formally observed and that they have received feedback that includes recommendations for next steps. However, this practice is at the beginning stage and has not yet fully rendered impactful results on student achievement and effective teaching practices. One teacher stated, “This year we are getting a lot out of this. It helps us make sense of things.” But, the actual practice of implementing recommendations for professional growth is cautiously enacted thus the school has not yet seen marked academic improvement as evidenced in student data.
  - The principal states that the school is “starting to use Danielson now.” He also states that they will be “going in-depth this coming semester.” Consequently, direct linkages to a common instructional framework are in the developing stages. Thus, in the absence of a common tool to guide professional growth and provide consistent and clear feedback to teachers for next steps, aligned to best instructional practices to close the achievement gap, limits increased student learning outcomes.
- Develop a system for continually measuring instructional and organizational growth so that expedient adjustments may be made to ensure continued student learning. (5.1)
  - School leaders have begun work in keeping a watchful eye on instruction through frequent classroom visits and high visibility throughout the school. However, the school has not yet developed a solid system and structure to ensure continued and steady monitoring of the required connections between instructional and organizational decisions. As a result, adjustments were not expediently made to support student learning dips that occurred during the fall semester and class passing percentage rates for this semester remained flat.
  - The school is starting to make strides in usage of resources at the beginning of this school year. However, there is no overall plan for sustaining these positive decisions. Consequently, timely changes were not made to support achieving interim goals as reflected in decreased student pass rates.
- Create a school-wide system of assessing students that informs instruction that increases student achievement. (2.2)
  - Teachers have begun to use common end-of-unit assessments to measure student progress. However, the development of assessments is primarily based on a “mock Regents” format. There has not yet been consistent development of learning measurements that evolve from authentic student work. The examination of formative student work is a practice of some teacher teams that has not yet fully developed. Thus, classroom instruction does not address true student learning needs. In addition, many teachers have begun using the “Exit slip” as a way of measuring student learning during class. But there is no consistent usage of higher order questioning during class to assess student learning. As a result, some students are lost and disengage during class due to a lack of understanding one aspect of a lesson.

- Deepen teachers' knowledge of differentiated instruction and questions that challenge students' thinking, in order to prepare all students with college readiness skills. (1.2)
  - Teachers in some classrooms have made efforts to use varied instructional strategies. Specifically, one US History class offered students the opportunity to move from station -to-station exploring queries about authentic documents. However, all other classes showed little to no variation in instruction or academic tasks assigned. In addition, teacher questioning focused on lower level Bloom's taxonomy as they engaged students with, "What is...." questions throughout most lessons. As a result, while students with high interest tended to be engaged, many students sat idly and were non-participatory during classes. Thus, across classrooms and content areas, the uneven level of student engagement and participation limits opportunities for all students to expand their learning outcomes.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: Coalition for Social Change</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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			<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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?		<b>X</b>		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?		<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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			<b>X</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.**

<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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?	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