

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Vanguard High School

High School 449

**317 East 67 Street
New York
NY 10065**

Principal: William Klann

Dates of review: April 19 - 20, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Vanguard is a high school with 428 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 27% Black, 60% Hispanic, 4% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 84.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to achieve school goals and to support improvements in teaching and learning. (1.3)
 - The newly appointed principal's strategic use of school resources is supportive of meeting the instructional goals. By offering new courses, such as non-fiction workshop and math foundations, the school is able to meet the needs of students who have deficits in literacy and/or math. Enrichment initiatives, such as advanced placement Calculus, on-site college courses, SAT preparation, and the use of a fully integrated web-based college application and tracking program, are utilized to improve college readiness for both high and low performing students. All teacher teams incorporate technology, such as Promethean Boards, Activision, Activboards, digital audio recorders, i-Mac Pro Photo Booth, i-Movie software and document cameras, to design challenging and engaging curriculum and assessments that enable students to incorporate higher order thinking into their work processes. The school's allocation of its budget towards creating small classes underlines the importance placed on addressing students' learning needs. As a result, the school maintains a 14:1 student/teacher ratio, most subject classes' average no more than 20 students, there is an increase in the percentage of students earning 10 or more credits per year, and academic support for students performing in the lowest third Citywide has been strengthened.
 - Students who are programmed based on academic need allows for heterogeneous groupings, and some upper-grade classes contain students from multiple grades. All content area classes are double periods utilizing rotational block scheduling to ensure that students read, write, and discuss, everyday, leading to work products emphasizing "depth over breadth." Teacher teams representing grade, vertical, and/or horizontal department teams, meet two periods each week to methodically focus on varying groups of targeted students, including both high and low achievers, to ensure success for all students in high school and beyond. As a result, recent Progress Report data indicates a 9% increase in the four-year graduation rate and a 50% increase in English Regents' pass rates.
- Relationships across the school that are warm and supportive, enable students to feel valued and sustain a positive culture that promotes academic and personal growth. (1.4)
 - Via the school's student government, with representatives from every advisory class, all students are represented and have a voice in school-level decisions. These reps turnkey information and decisions to their respective advisories after each student government meeting which is the primary vehicle for students to influence school-wide decisions. Every student attends daily advisory and weekly Advisory Circle lessons that tap into current social-emotional concerns, enabling the community to quickly respond to issues that arise for students, parents, and teachers. An

increase in students' use of an on-line social network prompted a series of lessons designed to prevent cyber-bullying. In addition, the school's small size and project-based learning choices enable students to become very interested in their learning, as evidenced by observed debates and presentations requiring students to defend their positions and/or knowledge. Students articulate the fact that they feel highly supported by the staff, especially regarding their advisory classes, which are led by the same teacher for all four of their years at the school, thus fostering on-going student-adult relationships that truly impact student success.

- Learning Environment Survey results prompted the school to improve efforts to increase student attendance. The school now uses a phone messenger service combined with personal calls by staff, including guidance counselors, to improve attendance. As a result, attendance has moved from 84.7% last year to 88% so far this year. In addition, both parents and students report that the school is very safe, enabling the school to maintain extremely low incident and suspension rates.
- Teachers design rigorous units of study that integrate Common Core (CCLS) and State standards to ensure that all students make progress and are prepared for college and beyond. (1.1)
 - Teacher teams are using the Universal Design for Learning principles to write content-specific curricula that include an emphasis on the six Habits of Mind to ensure critical thinking and analysis by all learners. To-date all students have completed multiple CCLS literacy and math tasks by means of project-based learning that pushes their thinking, promotes higher education readiness, and suitably remediates areas of need. Students demonstrate their thinking in all content areas through multiple modalities such as oral defenses, written summative assessments, visual representations, solving new and novel problems, and by teaching what they have learned to others. As a result, the school has earned six extra credits on the Progress Report for closing the achievement gap and Consortium school performance data shows that fewer numbers of the students require remedial courses when entering college compared to Citywide averages.
 - Teacher teams effectively analyze student work and data to plan educational tasks and design curriculum, ensuring that all students' learning needs are met. The Reading Writing Workshop team routinely looks at student work and administers a literacy diagnostic tool several times yearlong, to assess growth and revise goals for individual and groups of students, resulting in the development of skills-specific organizational tools, such as "thesis generators" and outline guides. Consequently, students on all levels achieve progress.
- Numerous task-based learning projects enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the concepts and content of the curriculum and produce significant work products. (1.2)
 - All content area classrooms focus on developing the six Habits of Mind, a foundational school-wide practice, in which students routinely make connections, use evidence to support their views, consider other viewpoints, discuss topic importance, consider alternatives, and explain their thinking. Students with diverse learning needs work on many

different projects to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts and content of the curriculum as part of their individual portfolio assessments. A geometry exhibition in which students conduct an exhaustive study of triangles, requires them to back up all of their claims with explicit evidence and guides them through a series of tiered activities in which triangles are used as models around which to build and explain other shape relationships.

- Almost all classrooms demonstrate that teachers use data to strategically group students and design multiple entry points into the curricula. A grade 10 Global Studies class utilizes six different primary sources to enable students to analyze the Armenian Genocide during World War I. Groups of students, based on their reading abilities, work together with well-matched primary source materials, resulting in high levels of engagement and accountable conversation. In addition, hallway and classroom bulletin boards contain copious displays of student work, demonstrating students' abilities to articulate their thinking. As a result, 70 out of the 78 students required to take the English Regents this year have already passed, enabling the school to meet adequate yearly progress targets.
- Teacher teams use rubrics and teacher-created assessments to analyze student-learning outcomes so that suitable adjustments can be made. (2.2)
 - All content area teachers engage in team-level work developing differentiated assessments that adequately address varying abilities. Rubrics that are created for numerous performance tasks are used by students to understand clear expectations, self-assess their own work, and peer-assess the work of others, both individually and in groups. Exit slips are designed to push student thinking, and ask students to make connections and share ideas and wonderings they might have that challenge their own thinking. Teachers use this information to adjust practices, including incorporating new grouping strategies and designing tasks based on student interest and needs.
 - All assessments and rubrics that align with the school's focus on developing rigorous and powerful thinking in all students is used by teams to make curricular and instructional decisions. The Reading and Writing Workshop team has decided that due to the fact that most ninth graders perform below proficiency in literacy, English language arts classes have been modified from semester courses to full year courses to add time for teachers to delve deeper into the instructional needs of these students. In addition, the math team has increased the rigor of the math performance based assessment tasks from the original quadratic equation task to one requiring students to demonstrate calculus concepts to raise the bar for student expectations and increase outcomes.
- The principal communicates high expectations to all stakeholders, thus impacting positively on student achievement. (3.4)
 - The principal and assistant principal have established a democratic school culture that empowers and motivates teachers to design and deliver high quality instruction to the students. Vanguard educators attend Consortium and network workshops to examine and discuss

exemplary student work and performance tasks, and align these tasks to the CCLS. In turn, teacher teams routinely use these experiences to further their work, thereby holding themselves accountable for progress in relevant curricula.

- The school's belief that every student can achieve is communicated through the sharing of high expectations via advisories. The use of College Preparatory math, the 6+1 Traits of writing used by many universities, the increased numbers of students taking College Now and advanced placement courses, a new senior internship initiative, and college visitation days, enables 90% of graduating students to enjoy college acceptances.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the use of the school's observation tools to advance pedagogical practices, promote professional growth, and ensure continuous student improvement. (4.1)
 - The school is focusing on the areas of coherent instruction, questioning, student engagement techniques, and formative assessment practices utilizing both the Danielson and Marshall teaching frameworks. Peer observations are conducted by teachers who take low-inference notes as part of the school's initiative to make observations, both by administrators and teachers, a regular part of the school's professional practice. School leaders plan to move the work of the teachers past low inference collection into direct alignment with one research-based framework based upon staff consensus. Administrators use running records to record informal class visitations, however, these cycles of observation are infrequent, and attempt to cover four domain competencies at the same time. As a result, feedback does not align to any specific framework or competency, providing teachers with limited measures of their strengths and next steps not yet fully connected to a specific rubric. Consequently, opportunities to communicate pedagogical expertise in identified areas of foci are missed, undermining efforts to elevate instructional practice.
- Enhance collaboration with parents to increase their participation in school decision-making policies and expand feedback practices across subject areas to inform families of student progress and next steps. (2.4)
 - Parent participation on the school leadership team is marginal and the parent teacher association is non-existent, thwarting efforts to engage families in school decision-making.
 - Report cards are sent home three times each semester and parents and students are provided with passwords to access an on-line grade reporting system. However, as these practices are solely procedural, they do not yet suitably enable parents to gain a full understanding of the academic strengths, weaknesses, and next learning steps for their children.
- Refine action planning by establishing interim goals linked to specific projected gains at indicated intervals of measurement so that school, team, and teacher action plans, can be monitored to maximize impact. (5.3)

- School action plans, inclusive of department and teacher teams, list intervals and instruments of periodic review, but do not include projected gains for each of these interim checks. The lack of this relevant information hinders the school from determining the effectiveness of their actions and enabling them to make further timely adjustments to improve student outcomes. Additionally, the school misses the opportunity to compare year-to-year interim assessment benchmarks to align planning from year-to-year.
- Extend the practice of utilizing data to set content-based differentiated learning goals that are measurable, time-based, and shared with students and parents, in order to promote ownership and success. (3.2)
 - Math and Reading Writing Workshop teams set goals for groups of students and individual students based on data and track student progress in terms of strand and skill mastery levels. This work is just beginning to take shape in the science and humanities teams, temporarily impeding efforts to set differentiated learning goals across all subject areas so that students are ensured of attaining a full range of content-based mastery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Vanguard 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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
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?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?		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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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, 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