



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**The Nathan Straus Preparatory School of
Humanities**

Public School 140

**123 Ridge Street
New York
NY 10002**

Principal: Esteban J. Barrientos

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Reviewer: Clive Parsons

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Nathan Straus Preparatory School of Humanities has just under 500 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through grade 8. There is a significant influx of students from other schools into the middle school grades. Nevertheless, the student population is more stable than in similar schools. Approximately 76% of students are Hispanic, with 17% Black students, 4% Asian students and 3% White students. The school has a much higher proportion, at 21%, of special education students than in both similar schools and schools across the City. The proportion of students who have arrived recently into the country is lower than in other schools. Most of the recent arrivals in 2005 were born in the Dominican Republic, while others were born in Norway and Belize. At seven per cent, the school has a lower proportion of English language learners than in other schools. The school receives Title 1 funding. Student attendance is above that achieved in both similar schools and schools across the City, being 92.5% in 2005.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has the respect of the school community, who judge the school to be well led and managed.
- The principal is building the capacity of the school to grow in a sustainable way, such as developing the role of the school's cabinet.
- Teachers feel well supported by the administration and believe that they are provided with the necessary resources to fulfill their roles well.
- Students coming newly into the school in the upper grades feel welcomed into the school community.
- The school's coaches provide effective professional development and support for teachers, which they value highly.
- Individual and small groups of students receive effective support through the variety of intervention activities implemented by the school.
- Staff, students and parents believe that the school achieves a positive and nurturing environment that is supportive of learning.
- Professional development is afforded a very high priority and teachers welcome the opportunities afforded them for professional growth.
- Parents feel welcomed by the school and appreciate the easy contact with staff, including classroom teachers and the administration.
- Attendance is afforded a high priority, with good attendance recognized and rewarded and non-attendance pursued vigorously, so that above average figures are achieved.

What the school needs to improve

- Use some academic intervention opportunities to identify and develop strategies that are of high interest to students and engage them fully, which can subsequently be transferred into more general classroom practice.
- Continue to strengthen the recording of the outcomes of conferring with students in literacy, and ensure that the resulting information is used consistently to support and group students with common needs in the classroom.
- Formalize the setting of growth expectations and goals for students and the tracking of progress towards them.
- Continue to strengthen classroom libraries with the provision of books that are of a high interest, especially to less skilled readers.
- Continue to build the capacity of the school's cabinet to support decision making and the school's growth.
- Further develop the library into a center to support fully the development of research and enquiry skills, using the full range of media available, so that students want to use it to support their learning.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Nathan Straus Preparatory School of Humanities places much emphasis on professional development to support and enable staff to develop and enhance learning experiences for the students. This is particularly important, given the significant numbers of staff who have arrived into the school relatively recently. The major focus is on improving the literacy skills of students, with particular emphasis on implementing records from conferring with students. This is increasingly enabling teachers to really get to know students and their individual strengths and development needs. There has also been a focus in recent years on developing modern learning environments, with up-to-date science and technology laboratories and a refurbished library. The school is secure in the data it collects and the way that this is used to drive instruction and to plan for school-wide improvements. The principal is ably assisted by the assistant principal in running a smooth and well managed organization. The capacity of other team members is being built steadily to broaden the range of constituencies involved in planning and evaluating the school's progress.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school uses data as it becomes available to understand the performance of students. Analysis and evaluation of State and City test data is used to identify areas of strength, as well as potential gaps in the student's understanding. The data is also explored to identify students who are on level boundaries and could be supported to progress to the higher level and those at risk of slipping back to the lower level. Data is reviewed to explore the relative performance of groups of students, such as classes in the same grade and special education students. Data is distributed to teachers and the school's coaches, who use it to explore issues for a whole class or the subject overall. Comparisons within the data are made, such as with the school's own previous performance, as well as with other similar schools.

Periodic assessments are conducted throughout the year to gain a measure of progress and current performance. The school's coaches are working well with the teachers to ensure that there is a consistency and accuracy to the on-going judgments being made. Collaborative activity between teachers, for example, during faculty conferences and blocked planning time, also helps to ensure that the outcomes are reliable. Much effort is currently being put into developing the use of the running records produced through conferring with students. This is starting to drive instruction, as teachers use the resulting data to group students with common needs and to provide differentiated instruction.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is constructed through collaboration between the different parts of the school’s community, including the cabinet and school leadership team. There is consistency between the school’s plans and the activities that are taking place to achieve the goals established. The improvement of student performance is driving the actions of the whole school community. The Comprehensive Education Plan is based upon a review of the data available and is sufficiently well-focused with goals and objectives that are adequately challenging and often measurable. The needs of groups of students are appropriately covered.

Individuals and small groups of students receive effective support through the variety of intervention activities used within the school. These are especially targeted towards those students who are most in need of improvement. Programs are directed and monitored through the school’s pupil personnel committee. Programs invariably include setting goals and monitoring progress towards them for the students concerned. The school is, for example, implementing an academic intervention service period, with staff selecting two or three students with whom to work. Each period requires measurable goals to be set, together with the strategies identified to achieve them. The principal has recognized the need to build upon the school’s literacy work to establish growth expectations and goals for students. This is so that students’ progress towards their goals can be tracked and those in need of intervention can be identified in a timely manner.

Academic intervention sessions provide an ideal opportunity to test-bed different strategies that are highly effective and of high interest to students. The school is currently exploring ways of spreading this effective practice to a larger cohort of students, as well as integrating them more routinely into classroom practice for all students. The principal is looking to strengthen intervention services for the middle school grades.

Parents and students recognize the school’s high expectations for students’ personal as well as academic growth. Parents feel welcomed by the school and appreciate the easy contact with staff, including classroom teachers and the administration. This enables a two-way dialogue between the school and families in order to support students. Nevertheless, the school is active in attempting to increase the number of parents directly involved in the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The mandated curriculum is supplemented by additional opportunities, such as through music and performing arts, as well as enrichment and extension opportunities before and after school and on Saturday. Teachers are held accountable for the quality of their instruction and its impact on student performance and progress. Teachers are increasingly proficient at using data to differentiate their instruction. Budgeting decisions, including the allocation of resources, staffing and scheduling, are appropriately based on

the needs identified by student data. Consequently, the teachers feel well supported by the administration and believe that they are provided with the necessary resources to fulfill their roles well. Teachers have, for example, in collaboration with the coaches, been allocated monies to develop classroom libraries. All concerned have recognized the need to continue this work, particularly with the provision of books that are of a high interest, especially to less-skilled readers. The principal is also careful to match teacher expertise to the most appropriate role and grade level.

Attendance and student engagement are afforded a high priority. Students are mostly interested in their work and respond well when they find work interesting and challenging. Good attendance is recognized and rewarded and non-attendance is pursued vigorously. This is the basis of the above average figures. Staff, students and parents believe that the school achieves a positive and nurturing environment that is supportive of learning. Students confirm that there is a wide variety of adults in the school to whom they could turn should the need arise. They also recognize that everyone in the school is concerned to support their learning and progress to the maximum. Students coming newly into the school, especially into the upper grades, feel welcomed into the school community.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal is careful to appoint new staff who he believes will make a positive contribution to the school. Professional development of all staff is made a very high priority. Teachers welcome the range and variety of opportunities afforded them for professional growth. The school's coaches provide effective support and professional development for individuals and groups of teachers. This work is the basis of the transformation taking place in classrooms across the school. The teachers value this support highly, which is helping to develop open and candid self appraisal. Other opportunities include inter-visitations within the school and to other schools in the locality, as well as collaborative planning and review, such as in block planning time.

The principal and the assistant principal have a good view of the quality of instruction in individual classrooms and the support taking place to improve and develop it further. This is as a result of formal and informal observation, as well as reflection on student data. The principal is building the capacity of the school to grow in a sustainable way. A good example is the development of the school cabinet, who are increasingly instrumental in evaluating the school's performance and planning its further development.

The principal has the respect of the school community, who judge the school to be well led and managed. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Everyone knows what is expected of them and procedures are followed well. As a parent commented 'everybody knows their place and everyone is in their place'. The principal has the capacity to continue to improve the school. The library has been substantially redeveloped, with support from an external partner. It now provides very good accommodation in which to develop the students' learning skills in a broader, multimedia environment. This is not yet being fully utilized to the point where students are eager to use it to support their learning, however. Other partnerships support and enable after school programs. Students and staff speak highly of the impact of Partnership for Children, a school-based social services counseling program.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Weekly meetings of the school's cabinet provide effective opportunities for a review of the school's functions, such as the quality of instruction and the impact of professional development. They also provide opportunities to review progress towards the school's goals. The principal has recognized the importance of continuing to build the capacity of this group to support decision making and the school's growth, especially given the good range of constituents involved. The school's leadership team is similarly expected to be involved fully in formulating the Comprehensive Education Plan, as well as in monitoring its implementation. An appropriate range of information is used to inform decision making. Student performance data is reviewed and compared when it becomes available. Evidence from direct observation of classrooms and the outcomes of teachers' and students' work provides more immediate feedback on the progress towards goals and objectives. This in turn enables timely and focused adjustments to be made when the evidence demonstrates that this is required. The principal, in close collaboration with the assistant principal, also has an eye to the future, so that shorter term plans fit into a strategic, longer term perspective. In this way, successive phases of the school's planning evolve from prior plans, so that there is continuity to the progression made.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Nathan Straus Preparatory School of Humanities (PS 140)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	