



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Halsey School

Middle School 296

**125 Covert Street
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Maria Barreto

Dates of review: June 2 - 3, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Halsey School is an intermediate school with 600 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 45% Black, 53 % Hispanic, 1% White and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 88.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 84% eligibility.

The school is housed in a large building which it shares with Public School 53, a District 75 school which occupies the third floor. The school is organized into three vertical academies, each with students from grades 6, 7, and 8. A citywide Department of Education Food Services office is also housed in the building.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, supported by the assistant principals and the staff, has created a vision of improved student achievement and high expectations.
- The school uses a wide range of data to evaluate and assess student progress on a continuous, ongoing basis.
- The curriculum is enhanced by enrichment and project-based learning opportunities in sports and the arts, within and outside the school day.
- Professional development opportunities, aligned with school-wide goals and targeted to improve teacher capacity, are part of the school culture.
- The school has developed excellent collaborative relations with similar and other peer schools which enable it to benefit from best practices.
- Parents see the school as a welcoming environment that invites them to share in all aspects of their children's education.
- The school addresses the personal and academic needs of students in an exemplary manner through a wide range of community partnerships.
- All members of the school community work in a highly collaborative and supportive manner, creating a true sense of family within the building.
- The school has created a consistently positive learning environment in which students are actively engaged in learning and all school activities.
- Protocols are in place and universally adhered to that address attendance, lateness and discipline issues.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish measurable, interim goals that are assessed and evaluated at specified times throughout the year, for all students.
- Ensure that all students and their parents are aware of their interim goals and the next steps needed to reach these benchmarks.
- Further develop differentiated instruction, aligned with individual student data-defined goals, consistently throughout the school.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The Halsey School has made good progress over the past year under the leadership of its dynamic principal and dedicated staff. State summative data reflects consistent growth in student achievement in both literacy and math. In the last year of the America's Choice reading program, the school is transitioning to the Teachers College balanced literacy approach. The Impact Mathematics program is also used throughout the school. Scheduled in-house intervisitations and partnerships with peer schools provide strong support for teachers in all content areas. The school has worked diligently on setting goals and targeting areas for improvement in line with last year's Quality Review. The school uses State summative data, Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA), benchmark content area assessments and citywide periodic assessments. These are analyzed and evaluated, along with formative teacher assessments, math unit tests and running records, to determine long-term and short-term goals. However, while interim goals are intrinsic to many of the computerized support programs for targeted populations and used to determine student progress, clearly defined measurable goals are not consistently promoted or implemented at specified intervals for all students.

Gender performance differences are addressed through gender specific advisories, high interest materials, and community partnerships, which motivate students and improve student achievement. The school has focused on learning styles, utilizing student inventories and providing a wide range of approaches to support targeted populations. However, while there is grouping in many classrooms, differentiation of instruction is not consistent throughout the school. Parent outreach has also been enhanced. A phone chain contacts parents in response to absences, lateness, or discipline issues. It is also used to share information about parent association meetings, parent workshops and all school events. Teachers provide progress reports to parents four times a year and call parents to discuss successes as well as needs, resulting in greater parental involvement in the educational process.

The school's inquiry team elected to focus on incoming sixth graders as part of a long-term study, using a wide range of assessments to target student needs and promote increased student achievement. Parents share in the process and student success is celebrated. The findings of the team have been shared school-wide and are being used effectively to group students and provide more targeted support for the new incoming sixth graders. This attention to all aspects of student life is the hallmark of The Halsey School. This makes it, in the words of interviewed constituents, "a family".

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 the student's progress over time.

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

The school uses a wide range of data to assess, evaluate, and set student goals. State summative assessments in English language arts and math are reviewed and disaggregated into a variety of subgroups. This provides an understanding of performance and progress school-wide and by student, class and grade. Baseline DRA reading assessments are supplemented with running records, Citywide periodic assessment data from Acuity, and benchmark placement tests in math and all content areas. The school has introduced learning-style inventories for all students, targeted to addressing gender needs within the building. Special education students are included in all assessment protocols, with modifications aligned to their individualized educational program. The Comfit technology-based support program in English language arts and math provides individual progress data for further analysis. English language learners utilize English language and Spanish assessments, such as the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) and data from the computerized English Language Learners Instructional Support (ELLIS) program to target improved achievement. Information on each student is compiled within a teacher assessment notebook, which serves as the impetus for discussion during department meetings, academy meetings and formal and informal planning sessions.

The school has a keen grasp on its performance and progress history. Teachers receive consistent support in the analysis and use of data through professional development, and with individualized, one-to-one support given by coaches and the administration. The school has developed strong relationships with similar and other peer schools, tracking comparative data and participating in intervisitations to share best practices.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

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

The school has excellent protocols in place for planning and setting goals collaboratively. Data from a wide range of assessments is collected, disaggregated and evaluated by the administrative team. Curriculum design teams from each of the three vertical academies also collect and evaluate data. Input from the entire school community is added through the school's own in-house survey of all teachers, parents and students. School-wide goals for the following year are then determined at a retreat and incorporated into the school's Comprehensive Education Plan. These goals are shared with the entire faculty through faculty conferences, lead teacher meetings, academy meetings, department meetings and school leadership team meetings. Parent newsletters and meetings also disseminate the goals, which are posted in the school. Disaggregated data is used to determine goals for target populations, including English language learners, special education students and upper grade boys through academy-based struggling student plans. Targeted students utilize technology based programs which set student specific goals to improve student achievement. However, this is not universal and many students are not aware of what they need to do to reach their goals. The universal sharing of goals

has created a consistent level of high expectations within the building. Student orientation sessions for incoming grade 6 students and celebrations of student success enhance high expectations. They are clearly evident in bumper stickers, honor roll bulletin boards, and inspirational sayings that cover the walls. Monthly calendars and newsletters in two languages, a bilingual parent coordinator and a true open door policy encourage parents to share in their children's academic growth.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The school consistently aligns its curriculum with school-wide goals. For example, the school-wide focus on increasing interdisciplinary writing in all content areas, with genre specific rubrics, is visible in every classroom. Content area lessons promote student inquiry, project-based learning and the arts, creating an interesting and engaging learning environment. However, although students are grouped for instruction, goal specific differentiation is not yet consistent throughout the building. Honor classes and the Saturday academy provide higher-achieving students with accelerated, enrichment opportunities. Technology-based programs, such as the Comfit program for academic intervention, motivate students to work towards identified goals. Sports and the arts are addressed through weekly clubs and partnerships with educational and community institutions. This provides the students with art, drama, band, robotics, karate and a citywide championship wrestling team. Target populations are often the focus of these opportunities to provide motivation and promote student achievement.

Budgeting and staffing decisions align with school-wide goals. The three-academy structure enables teachers to work with students continuously for three years. F-status personnel provide academic intervention in both English language arts and math. A school-based agreement enables teachers to work with students for 50 minutes after school, providing more focused support to improve student achievement. Teacher accountability is reflected in the frequent review of teacher assessment notebooks, daily administrative walkthroughs, consistent use of rubrics, writing samples and bi-weekly academy meetings. Protocols are in place for monitoring student attendance and lateness, providing instant feedback to parents and teachers. The atmosphere of mutual respect and trust is highly tangible throughout the building.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

Professional development opportunities are an intrinsic part of the culture of the school. Teachers receive extensive training in the use of data, through in-house and citywide training, and individual support from the data specialist and coaches. Training in the use of literacy in content areas, including the use of consistent, genre specific rubrics, reflects the school-wide focus on literacy improvement. Scheduled intervisitations, within the school and at peer schools, enable the staff to observe and implement best practices. Partnerships with educational institutions, such as New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE), provide increased support for English language learners

and provide parents with the opportunity to serve as presenters at state conferences. New teachers are immediately provided with mentors, buddy teachers and informal collegial support, and are trained individually by coaches in the use of data.

The school has made exemplary progress in the alignment of youth development with school-wide goals. Student advisories by gender enable students to discuss social and academic issues with teacher and community role models. The implementation of learning style inventories and specifically purchased materials also addresses these targeted goals. Protocols, such as the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP), student government and a school-wide positive reinforcement reward system, as well as a full-time guidance counselor, are universally in place. Partnerships with community organizations such as Beacon, Washington Mutual Bank, the Ridgewood Bushwick Association, and support from the city council through a series of grants, provide enrichment opportunities for all students.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Based on an analysis of the student outcomes for this year, goals for next year have already been generated and instructional plans made for the 2008-2009 school year. School-wide, grade, department and academy goals are regularly evaluated, revised and used to inform instructional decisions several times throughout the year. School leadership team retreats are held twice during the year and enable the school to reflect on the progress toward goals and to adjust instruction to meet identified needs. Teachers meet with the principal regularly and reflect on the data for each student and each class, utilizing the teacher assessment notebooks. Interim progress is universally evaluated through the school-wide range of periodic assessments, and is consistently seen in the computerized evaluation of goals set for targeted students in English language arts. In addition, special education students and those students utilizing the Comfit program for academic intervention also benefit from ongoing assessment and re-evaluation of the targeted goals. These measurable student assessments aligned with targeted goals, and analyzed and reviewed at specific times throughout the year are now becoming part of the school's goal setting protocols for all students. The school plans to introduce regular interim benchmarks for all individual student goals to measure progress toward the long-term goal.

This deepening level of reflection on interim measures and shared understanding of the clearly defined steps needed to reach their goals aligns with the principal's strong positive leadership and shared vision of student growth. It is this commitment to improving student achievement that drives the school forward.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Halsey School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					X
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped