



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Riverdale and Kingsbridge Academy**

**Middle - High School 141**

**660 West 237th Street  
Bronx  
NY 10463**

**Principal: Lori O'Mara**

**Dates of review: March 31 - April 2, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Paul Cosway**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy is a middle and high school with 1,224 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 13% Black, 47% Hispanic, 29% White, and 11% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 92.3%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding. The principal is in her first year in post.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school collects a good range of data to help them to track students' progress and there is a range of advanced courses to challenge students.
- The school sets goals that reflect its increasingly high aspirations for the academic success and personal development of all of its students.
- Students are motivated to get to college and are eager to learn within its very good environment for learning.
- Staff know and care for their students well, constantly seeking ways to help them to improve their work, and are fully accountable for their progress.
- Very effective systems ensure that attendance rates are high and students are not late to school or to lessons.
- Relationships between teachers and students across the school are positive, ensuring that students grow in confidence and maturity.
- Professional development systems are effective and school leaders monitor classroom performance well to improve the effectiveness of instruction
- The principal is a very effective leader and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a clear vision for its future.
- The school successfully meets the needs of students with the greatest barriers to learning and those whose first language is not English.
- Clear, consistent systems ensure the school is orderly and runs smoothly and there are good, productive partnerships with outside agencies.

### What the school needs to improve

- Extend teachers' skills in differentiating instruction, particularly in the high school grades.
- Formalize opportunities for teachers to evaluate each other's classroom instruction and share good practice.
- Extend the best practice in giving information to students and formulating interim goals and sharing them with students.
- Use data more effectively to analyze the progress of sub-groups of students.

## 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 proficient.**

Students respect their teachers, whom they find kind and helpful. They value the fact that they are in the same school from grade 6 through 12, so that they know everyone and feel safe. They describe the school as a second home. The school makes clear its overarching ambition for all its students that they should continue to college. The school runs smoothly and there is good discipline. Regular attendance is praised and lateness is strongly discouraged. These high standards and aspirations lead to students being motivated to do well, attentive in class, responsive and hard working. The curriculum is varied and designed to meet students' learning needs. The focus on music and athletics builds their confidence and the many opportunities to take advanced courses ensure that they have many opportunities to extend their learning. The wide range of after-school activities and outside organizations significantly enhance the students' experience.

The school cabinet makes effective use of data to monitor progress at individual, grade and whole-school levels and school planning structures respond to identified needs. However, the setting of specific targets for teachers, classes and groups of students is not consistent. The new principal has made improvements since the last review. Teachers are now aware of the expectations of them and goals are shared with students. The school has made a good start in using interim reviews of achievement to monitor the effectiveness of instruction and programs of study, but this is an ongoing process and is more effective in high school grades than in middle school grades. The inquiry team is working well, identifying the students for the focus group and using a wide range of information and data to plan the strategies to support their learning. The school has a clear understanding of what it does well and what the next steps are to secure further improvement. One of these is to formalize opportunities for teachers to learn from each other by observing good practice in the classrooms. This happens well at an informal level and teachers share ideas regularly at grade meetings. Parents find the school welcoming and responsive, but some teachers give parents more information than others to help them understand their children's progress.

Six areas for improvement were identified in the previous Quality Review report. The school has made good progress in analyzing data, in increasing student engagement, and in developing some types of differentiation, especially by giving additional support in class to those students who need it, but more work is needed on this. Grade meetings are now securely focused on student progress. At present, not all subjects are adept at measuring student progress. The school is working on ways to track progress more effectively across the whole school. This includes the use of previous performance data to predict future performance of students and classes. The academic intervention services, criticized in the last report, have been revised and are now effective.

## **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 proficient.**

The administration has an overview of the progress that grades, classes and individual students are making throughout the school. Each department records students' progress over time. Designated counselors or resource room teachers track special education students closely. State assessment data is reviewed to identify areas for improvement. At the end of every marking period, a report is generated that provides pass and fail percentages by teacher for each course, so that assistant principals can follow up any issues that arise.

The school records progress over time and has detailed records of the progress of students across all grades and subjects. This is not fully disaggregated so that any issues affecting subgroups can be identified, although the team is confident that they would be aware of any that arose and that class teachers would soon pick them up from their knowledge of their students. The school tracks boys and girls separately and this has led to course revisions where discrepancies have emerged. All teachers record assessment data and the administration knows the students well enough to be aware of general trends. Taken together, these systems provide a picture of each student's strengths and areas for improvement and groups of students who will receive special attention are highlighted. The school carefully monitors performance over time in English language arts and math for all students. These well-established processes have a positive impact on the progress of all students. Teachers are now confident in data analysis and have received comprehensive training and support. The principal monitors the school's performance in comparison with similar schools in order to measure the school's effectiveness.

**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 proficient.**

School leaders are developing their understanding of the use of data to understand how to take students forward in their learning, under the skilled guidance of the new principal. They analyze current trends well, set clear targets and use data to help to plan for the future, but this is more securely established in English language arts and math than other subjects. Teachers work well collaboratively to set goals and participation in study groups give them regular opportunities to do so. The inquiry team has selected students for a special focus and analyzed their past performance carefully to work out how to help them to improve. A recent focus on mid-achieving students is producing useful outcomes, aimed at raising their aspirations and test results. School leaders have set teachers challenging targets, with the aim of ensuring that all students make one year's progress in the current academic year. Teachers have been made aware of their

students' marks from last year and what they must achieve to show adequate progress. There has been good concentration over the past year on groups and individual students in need of support and the quality of this has already resulted in significant gains by many. The students who need the most help are supported well by both push-in and pull-out strategies. Other students receive good support from teachers, many of whom have websites with course material, grades or success criteria that the students can access. These are highly valued by students. Many more teachers offer contact by email outside of school hours to provide support and advice.

Students and parents/caregivers are given regular information about goals, progress and next steps. Parents praise the school's welcoming and informative approaches. They feel involved in their children's learning and feel that the school responds to their suggestions. The school makes efforts to reach those whose working hours make visits to school difficult, but not all staff are equally good at keeping parents informed.

**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.**

Teachers use ongoing assessment data to help them to measure the progress that their students are making. These include pre-tests, end-of-unit tests, and feedback in class, sometimes using electronic responders. This is a growing area of strength. In English language arts for example, a base writing test was given early on in the year to gauge the students' competence in aspects of writing, including punctuation and sentence construction. After further work in these areas, the same test was given again to check the effectiveness of the learning. Most students made good gains and these are displayed in graph form on classroom walls. In all subjects, regular grade meetings provide feedback to teachers on the progress of their classes and hold them to account.

The curriculum is rich in learning experiences. There is a good enrichment program, including art, chorus, band, dance and extensive physical education opportunities. All grades have educational visits and there is, for a relatively small school, a wide range of electives, honors and Regents courses. Teachers share successful approaches to make learning interesting, resulting in a positive learning environment for students. Classrooms are good learning environments, because of good class control, the good behavior that results and the many useful displays that help students to succeed. Teachers are differentiating their instruction in some ways, by providing increased support for those who need it, for example, or by grouping students. However, common tasks are generally set that do not challenge the high achievers or support lower achievers sufficiently. Teachers and students work in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

**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.**

There are frequent formal and informal observations of teaching by the administrators and coaches to monitor and further improve teaching. This leads to professional development that is geared to the needs that arise from observation. For example, in global studies data showed that marks were falling. Class observations revealed that students were not always fully engaged by the course content. A new, more interactive course was purchased and teachers given training on how to involve students more actively in the development of historical skills. Teachers report that they have many opportunities to observe each other at work, although this is not yet consistent or formalized. They meet in study groups weekly to review work, assess students' progress and to revise plans accordingly. New teachers praise the work of their mentors and the general support that they receive within this collaborative and supportive school.

Guidance and student support services are effective in identifying and resolving students' problems. Students are very clear that all their teachers are available for them after school hours if they have any problems and there is good health education and advice. Discipline is good. The school is an effective and smooth-running learning environment, with little delay between lessons as students move from class to class. Teachers, students and parents praise the efficiency of the school's administration. Very effective partnerships with outside agencies help the school in its work, including a partnership with Gearup to motivate students to aspire to college for the next stage of their education. Very strong community links, through the Riverdale Community College, extend opportunities for students, providing after-school clubs, an academic intervention services program and a teen center.

**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.**

The school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals so that success can be measured and adjustments made when necessary to make instruction more effective, but at individual student and class level this data is used more meaningfully in some subjects than others. Interim goals are reviewed, but this process is better established in high school grades than in middle school grades. Where the school assesses the success of interventions and strategies, it revises plans effectively in order to meet targets. For example, when data revealed that the younger students' math results were low, the pacing calendar was revised to enable them to repeat work on geometry and probability, which were identified by data analysis, as their weak areas.

The administrative team uses a range of data to track progress towards the school's goals and make immediate revisions where necessary, including strategic decisions affecting content and methodology. Staff are self-critical and very willing to share ideas and seek out advice, led by a principal who has the education and welfare of all her students very much at heart. The school community fully shares her vision and is working well together to promote the academic development and personal well-being of every student.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Riverdale and Kingsbridge Academy</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>			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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					X

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>