



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

DeWitt Clinton High School

High School 440

**100 West Mosholu Parkway South
Bronx
NY 10468**

Principal: Geraldine Ambrosio

Dates of review: November 29 – December 3, 2007

Lead Reviewer: John Collings

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

DeWitt Clinton is a high school with 4421 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 25.7% Black, 65.4% Hispanic, 2.9% White, 0.5% American Indian and 5.5% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 7.3% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 82%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 69% eligibility.

The school is divided into small learning communities (SLC) each with a curricular speciality. These are: 9th Grade Academy, Business Enterprise, Future Educators, Health Careers, Macy, Public Service and Veterinary Professions.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The inspirational leadership and vision of the principal empowers a collegiate leadership team to create a good learning environment.
- The creation and development of small learning communities provide a secure structure for students' academic and personal growth.
- The good use of data identifies school and SLC goals giving clear direction to the school and student learning.
- The good use of data identifies student goals firmly based on their prior achievement.
- A very broad and stimulating curriculum is provided through the curricular specialties of the SLCs.
- Good use of the budget supports the SLCs and literacy across the curriculum through very good professional development.
- A good environment of mutual trust ensures students are very well supported, enjoy school and have high aspirations.
- Good use of short but frequent lesson observations, intervisitations and professional development is increasing the use of differentiation in classes.
- There are very effective partnerships with a wide range of outside organizations to support the academic and personal development of students.
- The school, SLCs and subjects have very clear goals that are well understood by the whole school community.

What the school needs to improve

- Fully implement the small learning communities (SLCs) so that all students benefit from the academic and personal support these provide.
- Further implement literacy across the curriculum to enable students to improve their skills and performance.
- Use the good data to develop a greater focus on monitoring students' progress as well as performance and identify their goals more precisely.
- Improve the curriculum by increasing the use of technology in teaching and learning.
- Further develop the integrated planning so that knowledge, understanding and skills learnt in one subject can be applied and consolidated in another.
- Further improve the performance and progress of English language learners.

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.

A visionary principal leads the school. Her quiet, but very effective collegiate style ensures a very good environment for learning, where students perform well and make good progress. The greatest structural change has been in the implementation of small learning communities (SLCs) each led by an assistant principal. Thus, each student is well known in this very large school.

The school's goals are very clearly articulated and the principal is very well supported in implementing the goals through the expertise and dedication of her cabinet. There is a very high level of mutual respect within the cabinet where views are shared, discussed, decisions made and implemented very effectively. The school uses data well to monitor performance and progress and to set student and school goals. However, while it monitors student performance very effectively, monitoring of student progress is not yet sufficiently rigorous to give a more accurate view of how well students are reaching benchmarks towards their long-term goals.

Good use of data has highlighted lack of literacy skills as the main reason for student underperformance. This has been rigorously addressed through raising teachers' awareness that they all are teachers of English as well as their subjects. Good professional development making a significant impact on raising literacy skills across the school by emphasizing literacy in all aspects of the curriculum. This is still in the early stages of implementation but there are clear goals and benchmarks to ensure full implementation continues. The school is also very aware that English language learners do not perform well. The focus of the data inquiry team is to establish the most effective strategies and ways of supporting progress with this group of students.

There is a vibrant and stimulating curriculum. Each SLC has a particular specialism, which ensures students' needs and expectations are met. Students and parents think the SLCs give very good support through a fantastic choice of subjects and opportunities. This is one of the main reasons students enjoy attending school and strive to rise to the high expectations set. However, the school is aware that it does not make sufficient use of technology to enhance teaching and learning.

The school has made very good progress since the last Quality Review. The partnership with 'High Schools that Work' has had a significant impact on the quality of instruction. Increased use of data analysis by teachers is resulting in wider use of differentiation and group work. This has significantly improved student engagement and their learning. Attendance has also improved.

The inquiry team is focused on improving the performance skills of English language learners in literacy and math. They have identified the need to improve these students' literacy skills to enable them to express their understanding more coherently.

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.

Until very recently, the school's accountability systems has placed great emphasis on performance and these systems are very well established. With accountability now giving significantly greater emphasis to progress, the school is adapting well, but systems for this are not fully in place. This results in the school having an objective understanding of each student, class, grade and subject, including English language learners and ethnic groups, but being less clear whether the progress they make is better or worse than expected. However, good use of individual education plans for special education students has resulted in clearer understanding of the progress of these students.

Data is used very well to identify trends in performance and where particular groups of students do not perform as well as others, for example, English language learners. The school is also very clear about comparisons with similar schools although there are very few of a similar size. Effective comparisons are made with schools with similar curricular structures and demographics.

Improvement in performance and progress is supported through good administrative structures and professional development. This is enabling teachers to identify students' needs more accurately and to modify instruction effectively to meet those needs.

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.

There are good processes in the school for setting student goals, which are clearly understood by parents and students. The SLCs provide a very good structure where the teachers and counselors within each SLC meet very regularly to set long-term goals with time frames for individual students. Although goals are clear and understood, the school is reviewing the setting of benchmarks to monitor and convey progress for students and parents more clearly and frequently.

The school has used data well to identify students in the greatest need of improvement. This has resulted in the inquiry team focusing on strategies to improve the performance and progress of English language learners with an initial focus on grade 9 students new to the school. Strategies found to be successful are to be adopted by English language learners in other classes and grades. Whole-school goals are implemented through the SLCs and in addition each SLC has its own goals. The main focus is on student performance and increasingly on progress. Although each SLC has its own approach, this diversity is a real strength due to the professional discussion it engenders.

The goals set for students are clear and exacting. Students feel very challenged but also very well supported to meet their full potential. As a result, they want to do well, have high aspirations and know the next steps they need to take to get there. Parents

also feel well supported. They think there are very good procedures to enable them to discuss the performance and progress of their children and the contributions they make are respected and encouraged.

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 creation of the SLCs is the fundamental structure around which the curriculum is built. This is making a significant contribution to academic and personal development of students. The structure was introduced in 2005 with the incoming grade 9 students. This means the current grade 12 is not fully integrated into the system although these students are very happy to access it where they can. The curriculum structure of the SLCs enables the school to monitor students' performance and progress towards their goals increasingly successfully. Because this is a very large school the range of curricular and other opportunities within and outside the school day are good. These include arts, dance, sport and a very wide range of other opportunities. However, the use of technology in teaching and learning is underdeveloped.

Teachers are being held increasingly accountable for students' progress. Accountability for progress rather than just performance is a new initiative which the school is adapting to very well but procedures are not yet fully integrated. Students find the curriculum stimulating and engaging and teachers very inspiring. They feel safe in the school and are respected and very well supported.

Significant improvements in instruction have taken place through the good support of 'High Schools that Work'. Teachers plan a significant amount of differentiated group work to meet the needs of all students based on data analysis. Good use of the budget has enabled the creation of the SLCs and provided good staffing and professional development to support teachers in their implementation. There has also been a significant budgetary investment in keeping a low student/counselor ratio.

Students trust and respect teachers and attribute much of their success to the high expectations and confidence teachers have in them. Good procedures to monitor attendance, with an attendance teacher in each SLC, are resulting in rising attendance.

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.

The school has recently reviewed the procedures for carrying out lesson observations of classroom teaching. There are now many more short visits rather than fewer longer ones. This has supported the implementation of more differentiated teaching and, as a result, instruction has improved since the last Quality Review. More secure data has resulted in the school being able to develop good professional development structured to meet teachers' needs within each SLC. In addition, the professional development and support the literacy consultant provides is making a significant contribution to teachers' awareness of the importance of literacy across the curriculum.

Teachers are given many opportunities to observe each others' classes within their own subjects across the school and also in other subjects within the SLCs. They find this very supportive and informative. They particularly welcome opportunities to see their students taught in other disciplines with different teaching and learning styles. There are very good structures for teachers new to the school and to the profession. They are particularly supported through the collegiality of the SLCs.

A low student to counselor ratio supports students' academic and personal development very well. This low ratio enables support for individual students, and where necessary their parents, towards achieving the student's academic goals. The peer mediation for academic and personal issues is effective and valued by the students.

The SLCs provide a very clear structure and this ensures the school runs very well, students are well known by the staff in the SLCs and there is a good climate for learning throughout the school as a whole. A very good range of external organizations provide strong support for the school's work. These include the Alumni, universities and colleges, museums and art galleries, Montefiore hospital, LYFE center and many others.

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 well developed.

The SLCs set very clear student goals. SLC and school goals are systematically interlinked and mutually supportive. There are clear time frames and interim benchmarking for SLC and school goals, and benchmarking to evaluate students' progress towards their individual goals is being developed.

Implications of the school and SLC goals are well thought through and appropriate professional development is in place to enable them to be implemented successfully. Good use of common planning time, the inquiry team, professional development time and reviews by the administration constantly monitor the impact of interventions, teaching and curricular changes. Approaches and expectations are adjusted and adapted as and when necessary. Students are very aware of their own goals and realise that the schools goals are for them to be as successful as they can through having high expectations and aspirations.

The school has made significant improvements since the appointment of the principal due to her very clear vision for the future. It is well placed to continue the current good progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCHOOL NAME: DeWitt Clinton High 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 demanding, 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? | | | | 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? | | | | 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 make 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 | |