



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The School of Humanities

Middle School 347

**35 Starr Street
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: John Barbella

Dates of review: May 19 - 20, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Salvador A. Fernandez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School of Humanities is a middle school with 547 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 10% Black, 88% Hispanic and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 91%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 98% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Leaders and staff promote a positive and welcoming culture of mutual trust and respect in a calm, safe and nurturing environment that is conducive to learning and promoting social and academic growth for students and adults. Teachers and students are happy and enjoy coming school. Hallway displays of students' work proudly represent and celebrate their accomplishments. The principal is well respected by all stakeholders and communicates high expectations that have been embedded and understood by the entire school community. The school has established strong partnerships with outside organizations to ensure that the social and academic development of students is enriched by exposure to real-life experiences. Parents are extremely satisfied with the commitment of school leaders and faculty in regards to communicating clear expectations about improving student achievement in attendance, behavior and academic performance and what next steps are required for further improvement.

The school has a good system in place for collecting, recording, analyzing and interpreting data in English language arts math, social studies and science to track student progress which enables teachers to set class goals. As well, during weekly department meetings, teachers analyze the assessment data, attendance and behavior data to modify the curriculum. Teachers are continuing their work in analyzing data to carefully plan lessons that engage students and raise achievements. Teachers evaluate student work and track student progress regularly but broadly and the school is still in the developmental stage for setting individual student learning goals. Although making good progress, the structure that supports teachers in developing individual student goals that clearly define next learning steps to include interim benchmarks and timeframes that will strategically track students' progress in all core subjects needs to be fully embedded.

Professional collaborations are encouraged and supported by school leaders. Teachers meet weekly during common planning to look at student work to inform lessons. Monthly professional development plans are written in English language arts, math, science and social studies with a specific focus. Coaches analyze formative and summative data and share information with teachers and the instructional cabinet during monthly meetings that leads to revisions of professional development activities to improve instructional practices. The school's professional development plan needs to include a tailored personalized approach to support all teachers to develop effective teaching strategies that promotes self-reflection, evaluation and revision of instructional practices.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is well respected by all stakeholders and communicates high expectations that are clearly understood by the entire school community.
- There are effective systems to collect, record, analyze and interpret assessment data in English language arts, math, social studies and science to track student performance and progress that informs planning across all grades.
- There is a positive school culture of mutual trust and respect that provides students with a calm, safe, nurturing and welcoming environment that is conducive to learning and promotes social and academic growth.
- The school's strong partnerships with outside organizations provide exposure to real-life experience to support the social and academic needs of students.
- Parents value the commitment of school leaders and faculty and the clear communications explaining their children's performance and ways to improve attendance, behavior and progress.
- Teachers collaborate during weekly common planning meetings to assess students' work and plan lessons to improve students' outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the work to develop individual student's goals with interim benchmarks and timeframes to clearly define next learning steps and strategically track their progress.
- Build on the good start in ensuring teachers use data outcomes rigorously to plan lessons and instruction that are differentiated in core subjects that engage and challenge all students to meet or exceed their learning goals.
- Provide teachers with differentiated goals, plans and support so they develop effective teaching strategies that promote continuous self-reflection, evaluation and revision of classroom practice.
- Ensure consistency to regularly monitor, evaluate and make revisions to all action plans to include measures of progress with time frames to improve instructional practices and gauge the effectiveness of any training or adjustment.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

School leaders and faculty have effective systems in place to collect, record, analyze and interpret formative and informal data in English language arts, math, social studies and science to track student performance and progress. The school does a good job disaggregating assessment data to provide students with intervention that improves instructional practices and student outcomes for subgroups. Teachers use data to inform planning across all grades. This is effective in improving the curriculum to challenge and engage students in learning. Teachers formally assess students regularly during each unit of study to determine students' understanding and that they are on track to meet their goals. The outcome of all this data provides a composite picture of individual students' learning strengths and areas requiring improvement to target instruction and move them across proficiency levels.

Good use of an electronic management system for assessment data enables leaders to track the performance and progress of individual students and classes easily and provide teachers with a deeper understanding of students' needs in core subjects and utilized for intervention. The school undertakes some analysis to determine subgroup performance and trends including identifying proficiency ratings in English language arts and math and using the information to help form the inquiry team's focus candidates.

Parents are given progress reports and report cards regularly to keep them informed of their children's performance, progress attendance and behavior. They also receive daily calls if their children are absent or late. This has resulted in improvements to students' attendance and fewer late students. Timely updates inform parents of class activities and provide them with tips on how to enhance learning at home. Parents value the commitment of school leaders and faculty and the detailed communications that help them to improve their children's performance. They feel the school is a very safe and respectful environment where students enjoy learning.

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.

All stakeholders analyze internal and external data collaboratively to understand students' needs and to set school-wide goals. The school leadership team, comprising of parents and staff, meets to discuss findings further and develop the goals in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Teachers examine formative and informal data to set department and class goals that are aligned to school initiatives. They also establish social goals to develop students' study habits and to enable students to take ownership

for their individual learning. School leaders and faculty generate suitable school, grade, class, and subject learning goals, especially in math. The school is at the initial stage of implementing personal goals to help students know and measure their own progress but differentiated individual student goals with interim benchmarks and timeframes and clearly defined next learning steps, are not yet in place. Without these structures, the school is not in the best position to strategically monitor and evaluate student progress in all core subjects.

The principal is well respected by all stakeholders. He communicates high expectations to develop students' academic and social performance that are agreed and clearly understood by the entire school community. School leaders and faculty have created a collaborative and friendly place that promotes these expectations. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the goal setting process and in particular special education students' needs are discussed and goals and objectives planned or modified at the review periods. Rituals and routines to raise students' achievements are clearly embedded in the schools' culture. Hallway and classroom displays celebrating student work and projects, are visible throughout the school and promote a culture of success that is conducive to learning as well as reflecting a school emphasis on visual arts.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The curriculum in English language arts, math, science and social studies are standards-based. School leaders provide teachers with the opportunity to meet weekly to assess student work and make revisions to the curriculum as needed. Teachers share best practices. Teachers plan lessons that engage students in inquiry project-based learning, which students enjoy. They generate rubrics in all subjects that are aligned to State standards so students can track their own progress. Teachers and students use these rubrics confidently. There is uniformity in classroom instruction within the school. The dialogue between the teachers leads to improving student outcomes because the revised curriculum challenges and engages students in their learning. The principal promotes these current processes yet recognizes that the school is in the initial stages of planning differentiated lessons. Although some classroom organization such as grouping of students leads in some variation to instruction and curriculum, currently, teachers do not use data rigorously enough to plan differentiated lessons or instruction in all core subjects that fully challenges all students' to meet or exceed their learning goals.

A positive school culture of mutual trust and respect provides students with a calm, safe, nurturing and welcoming environment that promotes learning and social and academic growth. As one student stated, "teachers care about our education". All resources are allocated appropriately to support teachers to maintain positive environments that promote learning. After school programs are designed to meet the needs of students and are quite effective. One parent stated, "Even Mr. Barbella (the principal) tutors; he works with my son afterschool in order for him to complete his work". Students appreciate the additional tutorial support that is provided by school leaders and faculty after school and during lunch breaks to reinforce their academic needs.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

During formal class visits, leaders use an observation checklist identifying the teaching standards to provide teachers with constructive feedback. Results inform monthly school professional development activities to improve instructional practices and City opportunities for teachers. Leaders work collaboratively with teachers to set broad goals and plans that align with school's goals and mission to promote distributive leadership. However, goals and plans are not differentiated so each teacher develops effective strategies that encourage continuous self-reflection, evaluation and revision of their classroom practice.

Members of the inquiry team identify the strategies and activities that are most likely to improve instruction and raise student outcomes of a target group. For example, the inquiry team suggest the use of scaffolded interventions in reading comprehension that focus on context clues, summarizing and inferences school-wide. They identified those students whose skills most needed improvement and developed strategic plans to improve their progress. They promoted collaborative, vertical team meetings so teachers can interrogate data, share best practices and look at student work. Teachers also schedule informal inter-class visitations and provide each other with constructive feedback to enhance their practice. New teachers are assigned buddies and mentor teachers. This is effective in helping the new teachers improve their pedagogy.

The school has established strong partnerships with outside organizations through the advisory program that are supporting the social and academic needs of students and provide exposure to real-life experiences. In addition, students have numerous community service opportunities within local hospitals and the local Police Department, which are promoting citizenship and social awareness.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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.

There are quarterly interim checkpoints to assess school plans, instructional practices, curriculum and organizational decisions, most of which monitor the effectiveness of these structures in improving student achievement. School leaders and faculty are committed to ensuring that everyone is held accountable. However, the school needs to continue to consistently monitor, evaluate and make revisions as needed to long- and short-term action plans in all core subjects that include measurable interim goals and time frames to improve instructional practices and continue to increase student outcomes. Fortunately, the principal has a clear vision for school's future development and the school's self evaluation is accurate. He is fully aware of what is needed to improve academic, personal and professional growth and is revising the structure of the school for the 2009-10 school year. The plan is to change the school organization from a vertical to a horizontal grade level model. By doing this, the principal is intending to widen responsibility and increase the assistant principals' and teachers' accountability and ensure the growth of each student during school year in all core subjects.

The instructional and supervisory cabinets meet regularly to discuss a range of data, instructional practices, teacher surveys and student work. Teachers submit a monthly focus sheet, which is a reflection on teaching practices, in the content subjects. Coaches analyze the focus sheets to create monthly professional development classes to support teachers in modifying their instructional practices and provide students with quality instruction. A curriculum and pacing calendar is then adapted to meet the needs of the students based upon the results.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The School of Humanities	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>				
	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				X
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>				
	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?		X		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	

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

<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?		X		
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed