



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Harvey Milk High School

High School 586

**2 - 10 Astor Place
New York
NY 10003**

Principal: Daniel Rossi

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Reviewer: Mike Doran

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Harvey Milk High School opened in September 2003 as a small ninth to twelfth grade high school located in downtown Manhattan between the East and West Villages. The school occupies a part of one floor within a building owned by the Hetrick-Martin Institute, a partnering community based organization. The work of the school is constrained by limited accommodation and facilities. The current principal took up post in the Spring of 2004. The teaching staff undertakes a wide variety of responsibilities in addition to their teaching and they all serve as advisors to a small group of students.

The school is a transfer school for over-aged and under-credited students transferring from other high schools in New York City where they have been for at least two years. The school has also recently become an Empowerment school, giving it more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Classes are heterogeneously grouped in terms of both age and ability level across most subject areas, the exception being math where there are four classes broadly grouped by proficiency. The Hetrick-Martin Institute provide enrichment classes, an extensive after-school program, and additional support from counselors and social workers.

The school has a small population, currently of 91 students, comprising: 54% Hispanic, 34% Black, and 7% White students, with the remaining 5% coming from Asian and other backgrounds. Compared with other City schools, the proportion of English language learners (1%) is low, but the proportion of special needs students (19%) is high. The school receives Title 1 funding, with 70% of students eligible.

Attendance, averaging about 70% over the school year, is low compared to other similar and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides good leadership through clarity of vision and direction, openness and accessibility, and a hands-on style.
- The principal is supported by a committed and professional team of administrators and teachers.
- The parents and guardians value highly the work of the principal and that of the wider school staff in meeting the particular needs of their children.
- The school provides an orderly, safe and very supportive learning environment to which students respond with behavior and attitudes to learning and personal development that are good.
- The teachers know and care for their students.
- The school's induction and orientation programs for incoming transfer students, under-pinned by baseline assessment, are very effective.
- Instructional programs engage the students and good use is made of computer technology to support teaching and learning.
- Teachers are very supportive to one-another, and are well supported by opportunities for professional development.
- The school's intervention programs, informed by close monitoring of the current progress and development of individual students, provides timely and effective support for special needs students, those causing concern, and those at risk.
- The school has successfully established a range of external partnership activities and after-school programs to enrich and extend the curriculum, and to provide additional support for students.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop monitoring and follow-up systems, with incentives, to improve the attendance of students.
- Use student performance data to set specific and measurable goals, in order to monitor the progress of the school's comprehensive education plan.
- Establish an appropriate periodic assessment system in order to better inform differentiation in lesson planning and shared goal setting.
- Develop the use of individualized learning plans for all students, with specific academic and personal development goals.
- Ensure that professional development planning and lesson observations are systematically aligned through the rigorous analysis of student assessment data at class, subject and grade levels.
- Develop information systems to support the longitudinal tracking of individual student progress through the analysis of student performance data.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

In the three years since joining the new school, the principal has established a safe and orderly environment conducive to teaching and learning, and to the personal development of the students. Initiatives, such as programs for advisory, core skills development, and student induction, address the particular needs of the school's diverse student intake which goes beyond traditional demographic categories. Much of the school's work focuses on meeting the social and emotional needs of students while simultaneously providing them with a high quality academic program. It draws upon expertise within and outside the school to give students: curriculum breadth and support, further opportunities to achieve and extend themselves, and prepare for successful adult lives.

The school staff knows and cares for their students well. This underpins very good levels of individual support for the students, with timely and effective interventions and the involvement of parent/guardians. The teaching staff works collaboratively and reflectively. They are well supported by effective leadership and key teachers in meeting the needs of the students.

Areas for improvement identified in this report are mainly concerned with further extending the systematic collection, recording and analysis of assessment data to inform planning, goal setting, and the monitoring of progress at the classroom and whole-school level. The school is well placed to carry-out such further improvements.

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

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school gathers a wide range of data from standardized tests and internal assessments of the current performance and progress of individual students. The data collected are particularly detailed with respect to English language arts and math. Data collection in other subjects is less systematic. There is variation between classes and subjects in how assessments are carried out and records are kept. The principal additionally tracks the progress of students within class groups from their entry to the school. Students receiving intervention support are also tracked in terms of the support provided.

Students transferring into the school from other high schools are closely monitored, through an admissions and induction program, to ensure a smooth transition into the school. High school transcripts, application forms, interviews, and baseline test data are used to assign students to suitable classes and to an advisory group. They are also used by teachers to match initial teaching to students' individual needs.

In addition to monitoring academic performance data, the school also collects other data such as: attendance, punctuality, behavior and application in class. In particular, attendance is mapped against other performance to inform attendance improvement strategies. The gathering and use of such data, mostly qualitative in nature, is a particular focus for the school in managing an orderly and safe learning environment for its students.

The school has yet to systematically measure and analyze academic achievement on a whole-school and longitudinal basis, across classes and subjects, in relation to patterns of under-achievement in specific student groups, and for comparison with similar schools.

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

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The analysis of data from standardized tests and data from teachers’ own assessments in the classroom inform collaborative planning in English language arts and math. However, this is not yet sufficiently rigorous or consistently integrated into differentiated lesson planning across all areas of the curriculum and all grades. Linked to this there is also inconsistency across the school in the setting of challenging and measurable goals for students and the identification of next steps in their learning. The school does not yet fully use data to systematically inform collaborative planning and the setting and monitoring of goals at the whole-school level.

The transfer students’ admissions and induction program is an on-going development. Planning of this program includes establishing systematic monitoring against student goals for: improved attendance, attitudes to school, responsibility for learning, and credit accumulation. It points the way forward for future collaborative planning and goal setting, and for targeting areas for improvement at a whole school level.

Teachers have high expectations of their students that are shared with parents, and they know and care for them well. The staff works collectively to target support for individual students causing concern or at risk. There are structured opportunities, such as in advisory groups, for all students to meet with attached advisory teachers. Students discuss topics that relate to their development and raise issues concerning them about their lives inside or outside school. In this way student concerns are quickly identified and dealt with by individual teachers and the whole school community.

Progress of students is closely monitored, particularly in English and math. Parents are involved where there is a concern. Students are then referred to progressive levels of support and/or intervention programs through the minimum academic standards committee. Conferences involve students and their parents/guardians, teachers and counselors. Intervention is planned and the progress of students is closely monitored, overseen by the students’ advisors. The case study carried out during the review further illustrated the school’s effective monitoring systems and the high level of support for students in greatest need. The school provides a good after-school program of catch-up and support for struggling students. It includes test-prep tutoring, and extended school.

There is a rigorous system of progress reports, record cards and student-teacher and teacher-parent conferencing. It ensures students and their parents are kept well informed

of progress being made. However, the school has yet to fully introduce shared goal setting and associated planning for next steps in learning. It is beginning to develop the use of individualized learning plans for students to deal with these issues.

The school provides events and support groups for parents to enable them to more fully support their children's learning. However, the majority of parents have yet to fully take up these opportunities. Parents appreciate the ready access they have to staff and the timeliness with which teachers let them know of any concerns.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The weekly staff meeting is used to develop and refine the school's curriculum and instructional programs to meet the needs of the students. A major development is the integration of the 'Learning to Learn' program across the curriculum. It enables students to develop core skills that include literacy, numeracy, and collaborative working. Another focus is the careful choice of teaching and learning resources to match the reading and maturity levels of students. The Hetrick-Martin Institute provides a two-hour academic enrichment block once a week to provide students with opportunities in the arts, dance, drama, and music.

Students are actively engaged by the generally good quality of instruction. The school acknowledges that there is a need to strengthen differentiation of instructional programs through a more systematic process of periodic assessment. Students feel safe to try out ideas and solutions. They are encouraged to respond to challenges without fear of 'being wrong'. Each student has access to a laptop computer in class and this is being used well to strengthen teaching and learning across the school.

Student attendance is a high priority but remains low compared to other similar and City schools. Attendance is monitored closely and pursued relentlessly with students and their parents/guardians, by staff at all levels including the principal. It continues to be a major development area for the school.

The staff knows their students well, and students are very appreciative of their openness and approachability. There is a high level of mutual respect between teachers and students. Throughout the school week students and teachers meet in advisory groups to reflect and discuss issues of interest and concern relating to academic and personal development.

Scheduling, staff deployment, and budget setting are strongly focused on the needs of the students. There has been a considerable investment in teaching and learning materials to support and adapt the instructional programs. Careful scheduling, with longer periods to minimize transition and maximize class-work, enables an enrichment block, an advisory block, and a large common staff collaborative planning block to be incorporated within the school week.

The identification and deployment of particular teachers' expertise provides further opportunities to support school development and the professional development of colleagues. Appropriate levels of funding are focused on the professional development of

staff, and on the improvement strategies and goals identified in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan. However, the management of the school's overall resources could be further strengthened by the more effective use of student data in whole school planning such as in the identification of patterns of underachievement.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal has inherited most of his staff. He is still in the process of assessing the expertise of distributed leadership and teaching teams to identify areas for improvement. Staff selection uses a range of criteria and procedures such as screening against the school's ethos and modelling a lesson. The principal involves key staff, students and parents in the hiring committee. The selection process also takes account of the capability of applicants to make effective use of student performance data to improve performance.

Professional development is generally aligned to the needs of the school. It is well planned and managed by the principal in close consultation with staff. It is informed by teachers' professional reflection on their practice and the school's current performance. Discussion and debate in staff meetings is an important part of professional development. Staff readily reflect on and share their teaching practice. Staff expertise is well deployed to support teachers and teams through collaborative planning and joint teaching. However, professional development does not fully involve of teachers in collaborative departmental and whole school planning. It could make more effective use of school-wide student data such as the identification of patterns of underachievement.

The school is an orderly and safe place. It is welcoming to students, parents and visitors. The principal and school staff are well respected. They provide a model not only of their high expectations but also of their care and commitment to students and their families. The principal has the capacity and determination to drive through school improvement plans, and to make any organisational changes to the school that are needed to achieve this. The principal observes instructional practice and provides feedback to teachers. This in turn additionally informs planning for professional development. Goals are agreed with teachers for their professional development.

The school also provides opportunities for the development of broader personal skills and interests. It offers enrichment and extension activities to interest and extend students. In this respect, the school has established numerous very successful partnerships with external professionals and organizations. These include: HMI, New York University, the Manhattan Theatre Club and the American Museum of Natural History. They are now central to the work of the school and provide a distinctive enhancement to the academic and personal development program for students.

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

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

The school has good collaborative planning arrangements in relation to the current curriculum provision and instructional programs. Interim and final test results and regular diagnostic measures of students' progress are used to monitor, revise and adapt plans through the year, and to target interventions.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is a working document, reviewed through the year and overseen by the school leadership team. In addition, elements of the plan are reviewed through staff meetings. However, the planning goals and actions lack precision and are too closely aligned with the current performance of the students. It does not provide a sufficiently wide and strategic perspective of a whole-school plan with specific and measurable outcomes.

The school does not fully use student performance data to inform the annual Comprehensive Education Plan, and other linked plans, about the comparative performance of classes and subjects, or to monitor and adapt the school's plans and goals. The school has yet to establish specific and measurable interim goals, and arrangements for monitoring the impact of its initiatives and strategies for school improvement in order to make revisions as and when necessary. The monitoring and revision of such initiatives would be significantly strengthened if teachers became more fluent in the use of student performance data, and took a stronger role in whole-school strategic planning drawing on their interpretation of the data.

The school leadership team does not yet play a strong enough role in reviewing the progress of the school using performance data to inform their consideration of options for school improvement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Harvey Milk High School (HS 586)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

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

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

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

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