



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**John M. Harrigan School**

**Public School 29**

**425 Henry Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11201**

**Principal: Melanie Raneri Woods**

**Dates of review: February 12 - 13, 2007**

**Reviewer: Alan Geller**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The John M. Harrigan School, Public School 29, located in the Cobble Hill section of Brooklyn, is an elementary school with 711 students pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The student population is 54% White, 24% Hispanic, 14% Black and 8% from other groups. There are 27 students in four special education classes. Less than 2% of the students are English language learners. Attendance is approximately 95% and is slightly above similar schools. The school is not eligible for Title 1 status.

Public School 29 is an empowerment school that has a strong partnership with Teachers College to develop a curriculum which is supported by professional development activities. Empowerment schools have 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. This school is currently engaged in a research project to design its own periodic assessment materials.

The school partners with the Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project and is a demonstration site for New York City and schools throughout the country to visit to develop their programs.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is an effective leader who is respected by the staff, students, and parents and has created a positive learning environment.
- Teachers have high expectations for their students and are committed to leading each student to develop the skills to achieve.
- Data is well used to monitor the progress of students, to inform the instructional programs and to establish challenging goals for all students.
- Teachers differentiate their planning and respect their students, resulting in classrooms that actively engage all of the students in learning.
- Procedures and school routines are well developed, creating a safe school that operates efficiently.
- The action research team is representative of the collaborative spirit displayed by all school teams that seek to match best practices to student needs.
- The workshop model is utilized in all classrooms providing good opportunities to differentiate instruction and to work closely with small groups of students.
- The professional development plan empowers teachers to look at their practices and to develop and revise goals based upon the changing needs of the students.
- Students feel well respected and enjoy participating in school activities, and this is reflected in an attendance rate of approximately 95%.
- Parents are very pleased with the care received by their children and participate in decision making activities.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the school-wide tracking of data on a more consistent basis in the mathematics program.
- Further develop the scope of the after-school program sponsored by the PTA to meet the academic needs of students in greatest need.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

Public School 29 is an effective school with high expectations for all students. The principal is a dedicated leader focused on developing the use of data to improve student outcomes. Teachers are committed to the principal's vision and work to improve the skills of every child, seeking to develop their independence and thinking. This is built on a foundation of mutual respect between the staff and the students.

The staff are actively involved in establishing and revising goals, monitoring and analyzing student progress through assessment data in reading, writing and mathematics, resulting in an upwards trend of test results. The school has developed its own assessment tools in partnership with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. These are presently being implemented by the teachers to better assess individual students' needs. The professional development plan is based upon this program and serves the students and teachers well. Teachers are encouraged to participate in continuous learning activities such as working in study groups and school committees. Teachers differentiate their instruction regularly, regrouping students based upon their changing needs.

Parents are pleased with the progress made by their children and the care they receive. They also support the after school program and value the impact of learning support staff who work in the classrooms.

### 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 well developed.**

The school gathers its own data in reading, writing and mathematics and tracks student progress effectively. The school's newly-developed reading assessment tool is used to maintain a running record of literacy achievement. It is presently being used to track the reading level of each student and sets benchmarks for achievement on each grade. Goals for each student are monitored through this process, allowing teachers to measure progress and to determine whether further support is needed.

The principal compares results with other schools in conversations with other principals. An action research team is studying student progress that includes looking at gender, ethnicity and years enrolled at PS 29. The school also studies the data concerning the progress of English language learners and special education students. As a result, teachers of English language learners received training to better support these students, in part using a push-in model. The school uses a child study team to review the needs of students who are not on level in reading and or mathematics and each student is provided with an intervention plan which is monitored by a case manager on a weekly basis.

As a result of the use of running records and weekly conferences with students, teachers are able to determine the needs of each student. These results are monitored by the school leaders who help support the next steps. Teachers meet regularly to discuss the data and determine how successfully they are achieving their goals. These tools allow each teacher to ensure that each child is reading at their appropriate level. The tracking of data in mathematics does not yet match that in the literacy plan.

**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 well developed.**

The collaborative goal-setting process begins with focused meetings with the principal and each staff member where individual, measurable student goals are determined and school goals are strengthened. Teachers derive a great deal of information about each student from the data. They have developed considerable skills in tracking running records on a daily basis, and conferencing between teachers and students is conducted on a weekly basis. A detailed picture of each student is developed through these assessment tools. The program has built-in goals whereby each student is expected to reach a certain level by the end of each year.

Teachers set goals and evaluate progress towards them with each student. A teacher serves as a grade leader for each grade and facilitates meetings where they reflect on the data and how it impacts on each subject area. Grade leaders meet monthly with the principal to reflect on the effectiveness of the program. They then decide how programs can be improved now and in the future.

Each new teacher has a mentor teacher within the grade to support them in developing skills in using the data. These partnerships result in a collaborative process whereby teachers plan and set goals together. The same assessment tools serve to identify students who are not making adequate progress and are used to determine the needs of special education students. Support for these students includes a collaborative team teaching class in which special and general education students are taught together.

In order to increase teacher-student support time, class sizes have been reduced in all grades. Intervention staff push-in as an additional means to provide more one-on-one time with students. A child study team reviews the progress of students based on the assessments and the expected goals for improvement. They look at student work and consult with the intervention specialist who formulates a plan for each student.

The school regularly informs parents about the school programs and progress of their children. The school provides parents with an opportunity to visit and interact with their children, in class, on a monthly basis. Parents participate on school committees in decision-making activities. They feel that the school sets high expectations for their children. Students are aware of these expectations and work hard on a daily basis. All members of the school community are determined to achieve the goals of the school.

**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 well developed.**

The curriculum selected by the school for literacy, writing and mathematics has built-in structures that generate data to track students’ progress. The school has established units of study that are aligned to the required standards, ensuring that the skills and concepts in instruction challenge the students. Teachers regularly evaluate lessons and regroup students for instruction. Teachers are trained to use the assessment tools which are directly correlated to the improvement of instruction. Groupings change in response to students’ progress. Materials and lessons are differentiated based upon the needs of each student and there has been a three-year upward trend in the standardized examination results as a result of the planned curriculum. Students are expected to demonstrate their skills to ensure they are secure. The principal is aware that the tracking of mathematics data must be more consistent to match that in English.

Budgeting decisions are based upon achieving the school’s goals. Staff developers from Teachers’ College are contracted and develop the skills of teachers in specific areas. Professional development activities are an integral part of the instructional program. Staffing is closely aligned to the budget as additional teachers have been hired to minimize class size. Scheduling is aligned to staffing and budgeting. For example, grade leaders are provided with time to meet and develop goals with the principal.

Students enjoy and are engaged by the challenging curriculum in which they are given opportunities to develop academic independence and thinking skills. Teachers and students share a mutual respect. Teachers listen to the students and the students enjoy sharing their ideas. Programs are based upon developing the whole child. Teachers support this vision and refine it daily.

Students feel very safe in the school and they know that if they have a concern they can trust a staff member to support them. Students’ attendance is approximately 95%, which is higher than similar schools. They enjoy attending on a daily basis as they feel the school cares for them. Parents are supportive and appreciate the nurturing environment.

**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 well developed.**

The principal selects staff who have a commitment to develop student learning and a willingness to work collaboratively. The school has selected and supported staff well, reflected in the upward trends in the scores in the City and State exams.

Professional development, which has been effective, is demonstrated by the high expectations of the teachers and actively engaging classrooms. These activities are a regular part of the program in which the teachers look at student work and plan next steps. Reflection and evaluation by the staff is an ongoing activity that takes place collaboratively in meetings.

The principal frequently conducts focused walkthroughs with her team. Constructive feedback is provided to each teacher in a positive manner. Visits are focused and support prior training. The principal and assistant principal know the strengths of staff and draw upon this expertise. Professional development is evaluated by the school leaders and teachers. Teachers often visit each others' classrooms and consider strategies to improve. The evaluation of plans happens in teams where school leaders and teachers look at assessments, lessons, and units to judge their usefulness. Final decisions are based upon the level of goal attainment.

The principal is well respected by the school community for her commitment to the students and their families. She is tireless in her quest to improve all aspects of the school. As a result of her work and the respect of the school community, the school runs smoothly on a daily basis. The school as of yet does not have partnerships with community-based organizations, but the parents provide an after-school program for the 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 well developed.**

School plans are constantly monitored by the school leaders and teachers. Staff conference with students to track their improvement based upon records of their work, throughout the year. Unit exams are analyzed and teachers are expected to reflect on their effectiveness at grade meetings.

Planning takes place in the spring and the teachers are expected to reflect as a grade group on their accomplishments. Curriculum changes are made based upon the progress of students. The child study team compares the results of intervention plans and a case manager monitors the progress of specific children. A function of grade meetings is to track progress in each class as well as across the entire grade. Another function is to look at assessment results to determine the effectiveness of programs. Grade teams meet weekly and communicate with the principal about their concerns. As a result of these meetings, revisions are made, such as improving assessment tools and updating curriculum calendars.

Goal-setting is carried out on a continuous basis. Teachers have the data to support their knowledge of the students and they revise activities. Structures are in place for school leaders, teams of teachers, and staff developers to communicate that changes are needed. Goals are readily adjusted within a timeframe that is beneficial to students.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: John M. Harrigan School (PS 029)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X