



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Mayda Cortiella School

Public School 75

**95 Grove Street
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: Christopher Tricarico

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Reviewer: Joan L. Johnston

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Mayda Cortiella School, Public School 75, is located in the Bushwick area of Brooklyn. The school services 643 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Recent statistics for the school indicate that 69% of the students are Hispanic, 27% are Black, 2% are White, and 2% are Asian or other ethnicities.

The school has Title 1 eligibility for 87% of the students which is above that of City and similar schools. Student attendance, at 91%, is slightly less than that of similar and City schools. Approximately 11% of the population are special education students and 14% are English language learners.

A mini-school housing eight classrooms, which is part of the larger school complex, is located in an annex in the schoolyard.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is well respected by students, parents and faculty.
- The school consistently makes good use of data from State assessments, interim assessments and classroom performance to monitor student progress and make instructional decisions.
- The school is a safe, student-centered community where learning is the priority.
- Professional development, especially in literacy, has been a key element in improving instruction and is embedded within the instructional day.
- Instruction is well aligned with content standards across each grade level.
- The principal and assistant principals provide purposeful leadership.
- The academic intervention service model supports students and is well coordinated with extended day and after school tutoring programs.
- Classroom teachers are effectively differentiating instruction to meet the varied learning needs of a diverse student population.
- The budget is used well to improve student outcomes.
- Adults treat students with respect and provide them with good support.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop the use of data for targeted populations such as special education students and English language learners to improve student learning outcomes.
- Further enhance professional development opportunities for staff to develop their abilities in the analysis and use of data.
- Increase the partnerships with cultural institutions and educational organizations to enhance the learning experiences for students.
- Extend the range of arts and recreational programs, as well as school-wide assemblies and celebrations, to enrich learning.
- Continue to develop strategies to involve parents in their child's learning and help all parents to understand the importance of good attendance.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Mayda Cortiella School has made steady progress over the past few years and grown as a community school. In May 2007, the school received recognition from the New York State Education Department that it was designated as a rapidly improving school that has increased student achievement. The school now provides a safe and orderly environment for learning. Professional development takes place during the instructional day and before school. This has enabled teachers to increase their knowledge of effective instructional strategies and to align the curriculum with the content standards and assessments at each grade level. The school provides a teacher directed structured reading program in the primary grades transitioning to a student centered reading and writing workshop approach at the intermediate grades. This model is providing an effective structure to build the necessary skills in literacy that will enable greater learning in other content areas. The school uses data for instructional decision making and provides a number of effective academic supports for struggling students. The principal and his assistants provide purposeful leadership. The school has built the capacity for further improvement and has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement.

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 and effectively uses a wide variety of data related to student, classroom and school performance. Keeping close track of student data to monitor their progress has enabled the school to improve performance and make adequate yearly progress for the past three years. With a Reading First program in place at pre-kindergarten through grade 3, the school has been required to do frequent progress monitoring and reporting for a number of years. The school also keeps track of student achievement by using an effective range of useful interim and mid-year assessments, including the City early literacy assessments and the mandated State assessments for summative measures. For formative assessments, the classroom teachers maintain running records, conference notes and assessment binders for each student. Homework notebooks, with weekly assignments sheets, provide teachers with an opportunity to make frequent checks on independent progress. The school uses these data sources to monitor all students. It has now begun to break out these reports by various groups, including special education and English language learners, to more effectively monitor their progress and bring about further improvements in their performance. Another category of interest to the school is transfer students. The school now monitors their progress more closely as they have identified student turnover as a barrier they face to overall school improvement. There is also an effective focus on the trends shown by data related to attendance and discipline referrals. Over the past two years there has been improvement in attendance and a decrease in discipline matters as a result of taking measures based on this information. The school adequately benchmarks students' progress with several similar schools within their district. They are beginning to expand their analysis and goal-setting

to schools outside their region. One result is the implementation of a faster paced class per grade level to provide additional motivation for higher achieving students.

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.

School leaders, classroom teachers and other service providers work collaboratively to use data to set improvement goals and plans for immediate and long-range improvement and have used a number of initiatives to help them do this. The school identifies the goal of improving literacy as their most important academic goal. Data showed that many students did not achieve at their expected levels and were in great need of improvement. The Reading First program was introduced to provide researched based explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension in a daily 90 minute literacy block. Individual student growth and progress is measured through frequent assessments. This data is then used to effectively regroup students for instruction through flexible grouping and differentiating instruction.

The school became an extended-time school, providing small group tutoring for students three times a week along with a required 40 minute professional development time for teachers before school once a week. Over time, these training sessions have enhanced the capacity and skills of teachers in content areas such as English language arts and mathematics, as well as in instructional strategies such as differentiated instruction and assessment collection. Specialized training for cluster teachers and out of the classroom personnel are a response to addressing identified academic and school improvement goals. These sessions, as well as the small group tutoring, effectively focus on the needs of students, particularly those in most need of improvement. There is a recognition that additional academic focus must come to bear to respond to the specialized needs of groups such as English language learners and special education students.

High expectations are conveyed to students and staff through the high visibility of school administrators in their classrooms and the strong, consistent emphasis on improving learning outcomes. Teachers report that since the current principal arrived student management issues have been reduced and student attendance has improved. They also commented on greater parental support, improved student behavior, and that the school is now structured to focus on student learning. There is a strong and consistent parent association. The school has identified the need to help parents to understand how data is used and what can be done at home to support learning, so that they can play their part in helping the school achieve its goals.

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 school’s curriculum is aligned with its goal to improve literacy. In addition to the Reading First curriculum in the primary grades, the school has established a partnership with Columbia University’s Teachers College Reading and Writing Project that focuses on grades 4 and 5, with some transitional activities at grade 3. Teachers have successfully

worked with a consultant to use the reading and writing workshop model. They are learning to generate meaningful progress data from individual student classroom work. Parents, students and teachers identified the need to include more school-wide activities in the curriculum, such as assemblies, music and dance program and physical activities for all students, especially since the school does not have a playground for recess.

The administrative staff hold teachers accountable for their performance through frequent classroom visits and constructive feedback. The principal and assistants review classroom data, such as conferencing binders, and look for alignment with mini-lessons and conferencing notes. As teachers have become more proficient in using classroom formative and summative assessment data to guide instruction, they effectively differentiate instruction. Within classrooms across the school, individual groups of students can be seen focused on instruction that is targeted to their learning needs with progress monitored by the classroom teacher.

The principal takes budgeting decisions which are well matched to the needs of students as identified from qualitative and quantitative data. For example, class sizes have been reduced to allow teachers to spend more time addressing the individual learning needs of students. Funding for academic intervention services has been increased. Additional teachers have been funded to more effectively provide services to small groups within the classroom and in pull-out groups for students with more intensive learning needs. Staffing and scheduling decisions are made effectively and are seen as important priority areas. The principal has made significant strides in placing teachers where they will be most effective and in providing common planning time.

Students are actively engaged in learning and enjoy lessons. They know that teachers will be there when they need extra help with their work and that there are many adults to turn to if they have problems. The principal, assistant principals, guidance counselor, and nurse are available and approachable to students and their parents. The school has an effectively focused plan to improve attendance. However, there is a high mobility rate and daily on-time attendance is not uniformly valued by some families in the community.

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 recognizes that positive growth in school improvement depends on building the capacity of his faculty. There have been many changes in staffing. The principal selects staff who are lifelong learners and are energetic in embracing more effective approaches to instruction such as the workshop model. He expects teachers to be well trained in literacy and mathematics strategies and, increasingly, to be willing and able to make best use of data. There is an expectation that teachers will work in teams and collaborate by sharing good practices.

Professional development is recognized as an important factor in improving student achievement and there are very effective planning procedures in place. Professional development is based on the results of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Scores, other formal assessments, interim assessments and student portfolios. The school has consistently used data to target areas in need of improvement. Teachers at the classroom level are using data in more powerful ways to target appropriate interventions for their students. The mathematics, literacy, and Reading First coaches assist teachers in

effectively interpreting student data and using these findings to improve individual progress. Despite the highly successful professional development program, the school is not complacent and has determined a need to continue to improve teachers' ability to analyze and use data. The principal and his assistants make frequent visits to classrooms to evaluate teaching and learning. The principal conducts informal observations of one grade level per week and provides written reports to each teacher. In addition, there are focused walkthroughs and formal evaluations. Common planning time is provided for grade level meetings, cross-grade discussions and strategy lessons with the coaches. Classroom teachers receive targeted training provided by the Reading First consultant, for example, in topics such as guided reading and fluency strategies.

The principal is well respected by students, parents and faculty. Parents report that as a school that was once viewed as out of control by the community, it is now a safe and well-structured environment where students are known and respected. Parents feel welcomed and are also pleased that their children are learning to read now that learning is the top priority. Academic support services are well coordinated with extended day and after school tutoring. The school has a number of partnerships and has a community garden for students in grades 3 through 5. The extent of the partnerships with cultural institutions and other educational organizations to enhance learning are limited.

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 proficient.

The school has made significant progress in the past three years to improve all aspects of its work and has developed effective systems and structures to plan for improvement. Annual goals are identified and timelines established. Teachers complete an annual survey to identify their needs and priorities for the coming year. The Comprehensive Education Plan is therefore established with data from a good range of formal and informal assessments. There is a regular program of meetings to monitor and evaluate the progress towards goals which include monthly school leadership meetings, attendance committee meetings and safety meetings. Monthly cabinet meetings evaluate progress and make any necessary changes based on observations, data and student performance. Progress monitoring is conducted on a routine basis, weekly, monthly or quarterly, using comparable and multiple test forms to estimate the rates of reading improvement and identify students who are not demonstrating adequate progress and therefore require different forms of instruction. At the classroom level, diagnostic assessments are a routine part of the daily program. Information from formative and summative assessments is used to improve individual student learning. School personnel have identified areas they will focus on in the coming years and a planning process is underway. Several groups identified the need to upgrade technology and more effectively integrate it at the classroom level. Professional development that is sustained and systemic is viewed as a key to moving the quality of instruction to the next level. The principal is effectively using the goal setting process as well as measuring the success of building based decisions to continue improving the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Mayda Cortiella School (PS 75)	∅	✓	+
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	