



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Edna Cohen School

Public School 090

**2840 West 12th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11224**

Principal: Madelene Chan

Dates of review: January 4 – 5, 2007

Reviewer: George Wallace

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Edna Cohen School is a co-educational elementary school with 510 boys and girls. Their ages range from pre-kindergarten to grade 5. There are 470 general education students and 39 special education students. The main ethnic groups are Hispanic 51%, African-American 21%, Asian 7% and others 21%. One hundred and eighteen students are English language learners. Eighty-two percent of students are Title 1 eligible, which is just over 10% higher than the average for all New York City schools.

Attendance rates, currently around 93%, have improved over recent years and are now slightly better than for similar schools and are in line with the average for all New York City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school provides a strong focus on continuous improvement in order to raise achievement.
- The school evaluates itself well and therefore knows its strengths, areas for development and what it should do to improve.
- Data from standardized assessments and information through its own forms of assessment are gathered effectively.
- Data is used by teachers and instructional staff to plan work according to students' needs.
- The principal knows her school extremely well and distils this information with her senior team.
- Instructional activity is strongly focused on a corporate understanding of students' needs in relation to the curriculum plan.
- Teachers use procedures for evaluating students' progress very effectively.
- Students are highly engaged in their work and enjoy coming to school.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop consistency in the use of evaluative language when providing written or oral feedback to ensure that students are clear about the actual quality of their performance.
- Review the parental survey used by the school to make sure that they can respond to specific questions about the qualities of the school.
- Continue work to ensure that all students understand their goals for making improvements or their progress in their learning.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall evaluation

This is a well developed school.

The principal was appointed just over three years ago. In this time she has turned the school around so that development and progress are now very strong, positive features of the organization. There has been a significant improvement in the progress of the students, to the point that the school was documented as the number one school making the most gains in mathematics for grades 3, 4 and 5 in 2005-06 in Region 7, and ranked 23rd in New York State. Much of this is due to the high quality of leadership and management of the school by the principal, together with the highly focused and professional instructional and teaching teams. The principal knows her school extremely well, and this together with the effective assessment and data analysis procedures ensures that students are monitored closely so that planning and teaching meets the needs of all students. At the heart of the school is a drive for continuous improvement within a happy, safe and hugely positive learning environment. Staff share the school vision and have a huge respect for the principal. Staff morale is high and they are effectively focused on continuous achievement. Students and parents spoke passionately about, and how much they love their school.

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 principal has put in place some excellent procedures for gathering, analyzing and using data. The variety and quality of information gathered is used well across the school to help bring about significant improvements in students' achievements. Over recent years test scores have been rising and are now above those of similar schools. The attention brought to bear on individual students by the instructional and teaching teams is very high. As a result, the principal and staff know the students' individual needs extremely well and plan their work to accurately match these needs. The outcome is that achievement in English language arts and mathematics for special education students as well as for English language learners have risen and are now well above similar schools and the average for all New York City schools.

Case study evaluations have led to staff questioning and analyzing the provision they make for individual students. These case studies have also provided staff with extremely useful additional information that allows them to refine their planning for individual needs. The staff's high quality analysis of the data ensures that individual students are following a course of study closely aligned to their academic needs. This also allows specific students to be targeted for additional instruction beyond the normal school day, and this is working effectively, with large numbers having opted to attend. The principal and staff recognize that they need to continue to develop the use of data if the good work undertaken over recent years is to continue.

School performance is carefully measured against progress in similar and city schools and the leadership team closely monitors variations in performance between classes, grades, subjects and groups of learners.

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 principal has ensured that teachers understand and use data to help them plan effectively. Data is also used for students to set their own targets. In order to do this, time is set aside for teachers to discuss progress with each individual student. However, some students are still unsure about their targets showing that they do not form a specific feature of their thinking when in class. Despite this, the school continues to try hard to ensure that students are aware of the level at which they are working, and specifically what they need to do to improve.

Teachers use several different forms of assessment. This is to inform students about their levels of understanding, and to alert staff about which aspects of the curriculum may require modification. This good use of assessment and associated information not only allows for effective matching of the curriculum to students, but also allows the principal and senior staff to assess the best ways in which students learn to make maximum progress. This encourages them to create classes of students with similar learning style preferences and, in doing so, to accelerate the progress they all make. As a result, all students, including English language learners and those with special education needs make consistently good gains in their learning.

This school is very successful in the way it plans and sets goals in the pursuit of raising achievement. The high quality of planning at all levels helps students to make good gains in their learning. Alongside this is a corporate recognition that students will make even better progress when expectations are high, challenges are appropriate and goals are understood and achievable.

The school’s high expectations are shared on a regular basis with parents. Parents are closely involved with the work of the school and are able, throughout a variety of support mechanisms to assist their children with their studies.

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 school generally follows the mandated curriculum. However, the principal is not a slave to this and, as a consequence of her extensive knowledge of the students, is able to make modifications where appropriate. She works with her well informed staff to ensure that the school’s curriculum closely matches the needs of individual students. This means that there may be specific programs for individual students to follow. Alternatively, it may

mean that new resources are purchased to match the analysis of student needs. Teachers are clear in the knowledge that they are accountable for improving instruction. They meet frequently to discuss issues facing the students in their grades. At the grade meetings they share ideas about what constitutes good instruction and learning and decide which resources will help to raise the quality of their teaching in order to benefit and accelerate students' learning even further. This school works on the premise of wanting to continuously improve and is effective in working to achieve that aim. All teachers and instructional staff are very effective in using techniques which heighten and build students' self confidence. This enhances their sense of well-being, helps them to respect others and encourages them to accept responsibility for their own learning.

This process is the outcome of the principal's mission to provide a happy, safe and positive learning environment in which students can succeed. Students respect and trust the principal and staff and find it easy to talk with an adult about any concerns they may have. Teachers have a good rapport with their students. This is because they know them very well and cater specifically for their needs. The effective instructional programs which are designed to engage students together with the out of school enrichment sessions, provide a firm basis for accelerated learning and rising levels of achievement. Students want to be in school to succeed and, as a result, attendance levels are high. Clear school procedures make sure that all absence is taken seriously with immediate response.

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 process for hiring staff is undertaken in a rigorous and robust fashion. It involves the principal, senior staff and a representative sample of the teaching and instructional staff. These make up a human resource group who undertake the interviewing and selection process. The process is designed to draw out, for example, the level and quality of understanding of the curriculum, the nature of teaching, knowledge of resources, as well as the value and possible uses of data. It is a demanding and thorough process which has led to the hiring of highly motivated and effective staff.

The staff's professional development is driven by the needs of the students. Training takes place in school as well as by teachers attending courses beyond school. The in-school training is highly focused on meeting the needs of students as well as the desire to secure the school mission to improve progress for all. There are several forums which allow for training to occur, and these are led by the principal, coaches or other staff. The coaches in particular are in demand and highly valued. In some cases, the training focuses on specific professional development for teachers, especially new teachers. This is a consequence of the detailed knowledge the administration has of staff through the frequent lesson observations that are undertaken on both a formal and informal basis. In all cases, teachers who attend courses away from the school are required to report the value of the course to the school and share the key findings which can be implemented in the classroom. A successful element of in-school development is the opportunity provided for teachers to observe their peers teach. It is evident that the principal knows the strengths, weaknesses and overall qualities of her staff well. She recognizes what needs to be done to help them improve, and is able to relate this to the personal and professional development of each member of staff. Time is scheduled for teaching teams to meet on a regular basis for planning, data analysis and curriculum alignment.

The school runs very smoothly. Parents and students have a very high regard for the principal. She is very well respected and it is recognized that she has brought about many significant improvements.

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

The school Comprehensive Education Plan is regarded as an essential working document. There are clear targets for improvement built into the plan. Each month the administration assess the extent to which targets are being met and, if not on course as expected, what strategies to put in place to bring about success. Grade meetings and instructional team meetings form a very effective system for discussing students' needs whether at a general level, or at an individual level. Recent developments in scheduled meeting time are allowing staff to focus specifically on the quality of writing produced by students. The school is beginning to assemble a student portfolio showing key pieces of work, which includes student self-assessment evidence. This is being used to help to reinforce the developments that are taking place and assist in promoting even higher achievement.

Teachers and instructional staff wholeheartedly share the principal's vision for the school. They know that if and when they require support or advice they can talk with the principal immediately. Teachers also value the small size of the school which allows them to know all students and large numbers of their parents. Both factors help ensure that the monitoring of students is effective and where modification of their planning is required, it happens immediately.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Edna Cohen School (PS 90)	∅	✓	+
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