



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Amersfort School

Public School 119

**3829 Avenue K
Brooklyn
NY 11210**

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Reviewer: Peter Lewis

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Background 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

This elementary school provides an education for 481 students from 2nd through 5th grade. Most of the students are Black, and the proportion is higher than in other similar schools and schools across the City. The proportion of students who have Title 1 eligibility is above average and rising. The school's enrolment of English language learners is also rising with particular increases in the number of Spanish and Creole speakers, as is the overall proportion of special education students. Attendance is above that of both similar and City schools.

The school's aims place a high priority on endeavoring to instill in each student 'an enthusiasm for learning, pride in accomplishments, self-discipline, self-esteem, and consideration for the values and ideals of others'.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principal work as a strong and vibrant team in leading the school's drive for continuing improvement.
- The culture of peace and understanding is very well established throughout the school community.
- Interesting and stimulating instruction promotes very positive attitudes to learning among students
- The school's effective use of data in identifying students' needs and in modifying planned interventions has led to continuing improvement in standards in mathematics and English language arts.
- The school's leadership has a good understanding of strengths and of areas that need improvement and incorporates these effectively into development planning.
- Teachers and other adults have a very strong commitment to providing the best for their students.
- The school has been very successful in creating a stimulating and safe environment in which students and adults feel valued and in which success is celebrated.
- Students' social and emotional needs are very well considered in helping them to learn.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the use of teachers' assessment to determine the progress made by individuals and cohorts in order to take action at an earlier stage.
- Ensure that all teachers make good use of test and other assessment data, including teacher assessments, to set targets for students' achievement.
- Communicate targets clearly so that students know precisely what they need to do in order to improve.
- Extend teachers' skills of assessment in English language arts and mathematics so that progress in these can be measured across other subjects such as science and social studies.
- Involve all staff in the process of evaluation and clearly identifying whole school priorities for improvement.
- Develop short- and medium-term action plans for development priorities with measurable targets to evaluate more readily the planned impact on students' achievement.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with a number of well-developed aspects.

Amersfort School is proficient overall, and significant improvement has been secured over a comparatively short time. The principal and assistant principal have very successfully developed a strong sense of the school's identity that is characterized by high expectations, an effective and rapidly developing use of data, and a determination to secure the best for students. Since the principal's appointment two years ago, much has been achieved.

Considerable effort has gone into successfully establishing a 'Peace Culture' throughout the school. This is now consistently understood and adhered to. As a result, students' are eager learners, with good behavior and self-confidence. The curriculum has been reviewed and, as a result, improvements have been made which have seen a steady growth in both English language arts and mathematics results. Students are taught well and so make good gains in their learning; teachers and support staff are fully committed to their students. While the school makes good use of information that helps it to know where it is successful and where improvements need to be planned, it also recognizes that there is room for improvement. Parents are proud that their children go to a school where, as one said, 'We are all part of the family'; they feel welcomed in school and valued by staff and so are able to make a good contribution to their children's learning. This is a school that is well placed to develop further.

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 maintains comprehensive records of students' test and assessment data which it uses well in building its understanding of student and whole school progress. It makes good use of a system which tracks the rates of transition from one level to the next through each grade, specifically in English language arts. Careful comparisons are made between grade levels and the school accurately monitors the gains that are made through the year at the three identified marking points. This information is effectively used in developing a clear picture of aspects of students' learning that are more or less successful, and in developing strategies to ensure that any comparatively weaker areas are addressed. That this has been successful is demonstrated through the recent improvements made in results in mathematics and, to a lesser extent, in English language arts.

While this assessment information is used effectively, teachers' skills in assessing student attainment between marking points has not been exploited to the full in responding to students' progress. The school has made a very good start in analyzing results from formal tests and interim tests, in order to compile an up-to-date picture of students' achievement. This helps the school in its planning as the year progresses.

A comprehensive range of assessments is used to show the progress made by students with identified learning difficulties. Individual education plans are drawn up by teachers in

consultation with specialist and support staff, and the progress made towards achieving the goals identified on these is assiduously monitored through assessment and discussion. Because of this, remedial action is swiftly put in place should there be any slowing of progress by individual students. The progress that these students make towards achieving their targets is rapid as a result.

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 school makes good use of the information that it has available in setting goals for students' achievement. It has refined its work in this area so that in English language arts and mathematics teachers and school leaders know what students are capable of and how these goals will be achieved. The current whole school focus on writing is an example of this, with an excellent range and variety of writing on display, all of which has been carefully graded and which represents the work of students from across the school. High expectations are seen in teachers' comments, as well as in the presentation and content of the work itself. Aspects of students' writing which are particularly successful are accurately identified, although there is less emphasis on what is needed in order to improve or on subsequent targets.

Parents are very impressed with the range and quality of information that is made available to them by the school. They describe the high quality of written communications from the school and the readiness with which the principal, assistant principal and teachers meet with them to discuss particular aspects of their child's performance. As a result, parents feel that they are fully included in their children's education.

Students with identified learning needs are well provided for. The school makes use of a wide range of tests and assessments and uses these well to identify progress in relation to the goals that are set, for example through individual education plans which are focused and regularly updated following discussions between teachers and support staff. The principal and assistant principal are closely involved in these discussions and, as a result, demonstrate a well-developed understanding of the school's effectiveness in this aspect of its work. Staff and parents work closely together in sharing information about these students' progress and the goals for future achievement.

The school has focused much of its development on improving standards in literacy and mathematics and, in this, has been successful. However, not enough emphasis has been placed on using data, particularly teachers' assessments, to track students' progress through science and social 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.

Teachers work together well in ensuring that programs align with standards and that there is agreement across and within grades to ensure that adaptations and newly introduced program elements are taught consistently. Regular discussion of the effectiveness of

initiatives, such as with the whole school emphasis on improving writing, allows teachers to take ownership, as well as demonstrating a strong sense of accountability for their students' results. Recent developments in the school's use of assessment data have been effective in helping the school to track students' progress more closely and so assess the impact of curriculum developments. The budget is creatively managed in relation to identified priorities.

Teachers feel accountable for students' subsequent attainment, seeing their role as part of a continuum of learning. The school makes good use of assessment data in tracking the progress made, particularly in English language arts and mathematics. This has had a positive impact on students' learning. At present, the information used comes primarily from external testing and is therefore a summary of the impact of students' past experiences. The school has begun to consider ways in which it can address students' needs at an earlier point and, to that end, recognizes the need to further enhance teachers' skills in assessing students' learning between marking points.

The curriculum is interesting and, through discussion and sharing good practice, the school has ensured that lessons are lively and engaging. Students respond well to the high expectations placed upon them and concentrate well. They are well motivated, actively look forward to coming to school and, as a result of the strong emphasis that the school places on the development of social and personal skills, their self-confidence is well developed.

A considerable strength of the school is the degree to which staff know their students as individuals and, in particular, any difficulties or challenges that students may face. One result of this is that relationships within the school are strong and positive. Students trust the adults they work with and know that they can seek help if necessary. Attendance is well promoted and is remains above average.

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 school evaluates itself as proficient in its performance against this quality standard. However, there are well-developed aspects in its practice which demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to secure further improvement. Staff, especially school leaders, are carefully selected on the basis of identified priorities. The school's use of data has developed rapidly and has been instrumental in identifying aspects where improvement is required. The school recognizes that more needs to be done in refining teachers' use of assessment data to measure students' progress as well as the school's performance, and to apply these strategies more consistently across the curriculum.

The principal's commitment to securing continued improvement is mirrored in the rest of the staff through a clear willingness to consider new strategies and in finding ways of consolidating initiatives. Staff development has a high profile. New teachers are inducted and supported well so that they rapidly develop a good understanding of systems and, most importantly, the school's expectations of them. Although a relatively recent measure, the school evaluates its professional development, although these evaluations do not focus enough on changes that have taken place.

Monitoring of instruction by the principal and the assistant principal is followed by feedback and guidance where necessary. This supports professional development well and is

further informed by learning walks and the scrutiny of students' work. All of these features enable the school to strengthen its understanding of the quality of instruction. At the same time, the principal has demonstrated a readiness to take tough decisions in the very rare instances where support and guidance have not achieved their fullest success in improving instruction.

The school is very well organized and runs smoothly. Partnerships with community-based organizations are well established, particularly to support students with additional needs.

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 evaluation of students' assessment information is used well in identifying aspects of learning that require improvement. School leaders have a good understanding of the standards reached by students across the school and, through this, of the progress that is made within and across grades. This information is used effectively in taking action to match the curriculum and instruction closely to students' needs. The school recognizes that more could be done through the increased use of ongoing teacher assessment to refine this process, particularly in setting and monitoring targets for individual students.

Through discussion and focused monitoring, the school has been able to establish a clear understanding of the degree to which it has been successful in meeting its goals. At present, it is less successful in making full use of interim goals in helping it to know whether planned actions are successful in developing bringing about planned improvement. The school's planning is carefully undertaken using the required format of the Comprehensive Education Plan. Although the school feels that, in its completed form, the plan is too cumbersome to use as a working document, it has yet to extract key information about its objectives in order to simplify this task. Because of this, the documentation does not contain sufficient information to enable school leaders to identify the progress that is being made in reaching planned goals. As a result, until the end of each planning period, there are only informal mechanisms to help the school decide whether modifications are necessary in order to achieve success.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: AMERSFORT SCHOOL (PS119)	∅	✓	+
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	