



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Colonel David Marcus School**

**Public School 217**

**1100 Newkirk Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11230**

**Principal: Franca Conti**

**Dates of review: October 3 - 5, 2006**

**Reviewer: Margaret Lee**

# 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

The school has 1280 students from kindergarten through grade 5. Forty one percent of students are Asian, 24% Hispanic, 18% Black and 17% White. Thirty four languages are spoken within the student community. There are 75 special education students with collaborative classes at each grade level and two special education self-contained classes. Students are supported in their learning by paraprofessionals, support services and teachers for English language learners. Each grade level has one class group of higher achievers.

The school building has recently been renovated. The school is the local community centre and meeting point for parents and large numbers of families newly arrived in the country. New York City Department of Education has financially invested to upgrade the school playground converting it for joint use by the school and the local community as a park area.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is a committed educational leader who takes a keen interest in quality learning opportunities and in ensuring development of the whole child.
- The parent coordinator works effectively assisting families to support their children at home.
- Data analysis is regularly used to inform grade level teaching plans and curriculum development, and contributes significantly to the learning goals of the whole school.
- Support services for children and their families are directly linked to the teaching and learning program.
- The school leaders work as an effective team, successfully complementing each other with experience, expertise, and personal strengths.
- Teachers, paraprofessionals and members of the school community demonstrate a dedicated and highly committed approach to their work with children.
- The staff is highly skilled and knowledgeable about good teaching and learning practices and work well together.
- Professional development is based on staff needs and is a regular part of all teachers' and paraprofessionals' work.
- The students are well-behaved, work studiously and are focused on their learning.
- The school is well organized and runs smoothly.

### What the school needs to improve

- Produce a simplified overview of school development planning aligning student data analysis with professional development planning and their relationship to the school goals, and share this with members of the school community.
- Further analyze the performance of specific groups of students, to ensure that all groups are doing equally well.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

This is a highly effective school and despite its success staff are not complacent about areas for further improvement. The principal provides sensitive and purposeful leadership. She is an educational leader for the teachers and a community leader for the parents.

She has developed the school as a place of educational support and nurture. The school directly responds to the needs of its multicultural student group through services to families to support their children's learning.

The school collects student data, beginning in kindergarten, and uses it to allocate intervention early in the school year to ensure that any student having difficulty receives the maximum support. These practices are expertly shared by three assistant principals who work well together.

The teachers and support staff are highly committed in their teaching and support for students. They demonstrate high levels of instructional expertise. Their classrooms are well resourced with much celebration of student work.

### **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.**

Teachers routinely undertake and use a wide range of informal and formal assessment; this includes diagnostic tests, commercial testing programs, and teacher-driven assessments. All teachers view assessment as a fundamental part of their teaching. Student records are progressively transferred on to next year level, so that student progress can be tracked and monitored over grade levels. As a result of these processes the improvement in student achievement has been improving significantly since 2003.

The school evaluates the progress of all students and uses student data effectively to meet student needs but has not delineated fully by ethnicity and gender and so is unable to evaluate the progress of significant groups. The school knows that in comparison with similar and City schools it is a successful school.

All teaching and learning decisions in the school are clearly based upon the needs of students identified through the detailed analysis of assessments and other data. The data is gathered and analyzed for all grade levels in regular, ongoing cycles and teachers discuss student progress. Student data is also examined and monitored by school leaders to ensure continuous progress is being achieved. The response of all teachers to their students' data is carefully and vigilantly monitored by the principal and assistant principals through individual teacher meetings, faculty meetings and in frequent classroom visits. The staff developers have worked with the teachers to produce a more accessible version

of the standards for each study area. This has enabled teachers to ensure that they are directly teaching to the standards.

**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.**

Communication and cooperation between adults throughout the school is a very helpful and a positive factor in the school’s success. Staff ensure that students receive high quality care and that data is used effectively to support student welfare and instruction.

Staff developers work closely and successfully with teachers ensuring that the data collected is analyzed against the standards for each grade level by each grade teacher. This information, together with the results of item analysis, is collated to determine groupings and direct teachers to the next teaching points for each student. From these, teachers establish learning goals related to State standards. Teachers maintain student conferencing records, data collection, attendance notes and regularly refer to them in preparation of lesson plans that meet the learning needs of students. The pupil personnel committee has a wide range of student support services which are used constructively for the benefit of children and their families. Paraprofessionals and teachers supporting English language learners are directly involved in the learning needs of each child.

There are weekly meetings between all special education teachers to discuss and plan work for their students. The students are given pre-special education intervention tests. Intervention is streamlined across study areas and occurs throughout the year. Academic intervention services work with students in kindergarten through grade 2, although they are mandated to begin at grade 3. Intervention is routinely and effectively managed through documentation of the staff review decisions and a classroom observation to ensure that effective differentiation of teaching occurs.

Parents are regularly informed about school procedures, goals and student reporting information by a very able parent coordinator. Parent and teacher evenings are conducted to inform parents about their child’s progress and the conversations and written reports are supported with translation services for the major cultural groups. There are also information breakfasts on ways parents can support their children in their homework.

**Quality Statement 3 – Build and Align Capacity: 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.**

Documentation of the school program is well advanced. Teachers have produced coherent curriculum plans related to standards to make lesson planning more consistent among teachers. The plans are monitored and altered according to student need based on quantitative data and through observations, support and the expertise of staff developers. The school also provides a rich and wide variety of experiences in the arts, linking several aspects of the curriculum to support the development of the whole child.

Instructional practices and content are changed and modified in response to analysis of data for each student. The instruction of English language learners is closely monitored to ensure that instruction is aligned to their learning needs. School leaders have re-structured student groups across the whole school this year to continue to support students learning English as a second language, integrating them into mainstream classes. This arrangement is being viewed as a pilot study by the region.

Teachers are continually made aware of their responsibilities to their students as student performance is monitored progressively throughout the year. Flexible groupings of students based on interpretation of data are evident in classrooms. Teachers adapt activities to take account of the different ways in which students learn best and they set targets for groups of individuals within the classroom based on interim assessments to make sure that students build on what they know and can do. Each classroom has a range of learning centers and teachers construct learning materials to meet particular needs. The result is that classrooms demonstrate focused teaching with engaged and motivated students working in differentiated groups.

Parents support the work of the school and are made to feel a part of it. There is a strong after-school program and a range of clubs for students. Cultural events for the wider community are held within the school.

The school's budget is used for the benefit of all students and targeted especially at classroom instruction and additional instructional support. For example, to enable more frequent data gathering and collation to occur, additional staff and support staff are employed to allow time for teachers to test students, collate classroom-based student work and provide evaluation and curriculum development time. The four coaches, two for each of literacy and mathematics are fully deployed to support teacher development. The impact of this valuable support is evident in the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom and in the steady and consistent improvement in students' results.

The care for student success is exemplified by the 'spotlight' program where teachers focus on specific students' achievement and personal growth to enable additional social and emotional support for their learning. Students willingly talk of their feelings of safety in the school. The school operates peacefully and smoothly. It is well organized and transition from one program to another is responsibly managed by students.

The principal has established very good procedures for promoting good attendance and for reducing lateness. These are closely monitored. The annual attendance is 94%, 1% above the City 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 well developed.**

Expectations are high. Staff are carefully selected to ensure that good quality education is provided with good role modeling for students across a range of diverse cultural groups.

The school administration knows at first hand the learning conditions of each classroom and the learning needs of the teachers. The principal and assistant principal regularly conduct learning walks throughout the school, and confer afterwards with the teachers about their work. In this way, the quality of teaching is continually being refined.

Professional development is planned on the basis of staff input and identified whole-school needs. Grading of student work is frequently discussed. Teachers are offered differentiated professional development to ensure needed assistance is given to teachers. There are also frequent inter-classroom visits for teachers. Visits to special education classrooms to observe differentiated instruction have been particularly beneficial.

Staff work productively in teams, facilitated by the coaches, with a focus on student development and data information to progressively improve teachers' capacities. These meetings are well used to share practice and develop skills.

The school administration is highly respected for their direct involvement and leadership in teaching and learning. They routinely use qualitative and quantitative data to monitor students' progress to inform their decision-making.

The school is an educational hub for families and the community and works in partnership for the benefit of students with The Brooklyn Museum for the Social Studies and Arts areas, the Flatbush Development Corporation, Pakistani Merchants Association and New York University.

**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 is highly effective but is consciously striving to improve. The review of data is well developed within the classroom. The teachers' ongoing assessment and reviewing practices with students are reviewed regularly in line with the agreed cycles. Through these cycles, teachers are able to guide students to the next level as adjustments are made where there is a need for improvement. Teachers are responsible for monitoring their students' performance and management of student progress. This practice is a foundation of teachers' daily work with students. It has a high priority and is referred to in weekly faculty meeting and academic intervention service meetings.

The principal has established good collaborative processes in school decision-making. The information from teachers' data analysis is used to formulate teaching plans and contribute to grade level teaching and learning goals. All grade level goals feed into the development of whole school goals and the Comprehensive Education Plan. This process occurs in school leadership team meetings and in collaboration with some parents. The interlinking of these areas is not always evident to those school members who have not been involved. For example, it is not clear to all at what stage in the process student assessment information relates to curriculum planning, professional development planning and whole school goal setting. Not all members of the school community, including some teachers, understand these linkages between each area.

The staff leadership team and faculty members all review progress towards goals. There is a good range of on-site support to do this well, including the support of external specialist consultants. In response to identified needs, modifications are made to the curriculum pacing calendars, professional development calendar and school goals.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Col. David Marcus School (PS 217)</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