



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

George H Lindsay School

Public School 250

**108 Montrose Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Nora Barnes

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Reviewer: George Wallace

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

George H Lindsay School has 882 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Sixty six per cent of students are Title 1 eligible, which is above the average for similar schools, but below that for City schools. The proportion of Title 1 funded students has dropped significantly in recent years. The school student population comprises 74% Hispanic, 10% Black, 13% Asian, 2% White and just less than 1% American Indian/Alaskan. The proportion of students who are English language learners is 14% and 2% are special education students.

The schools' roll has fallen over the past two years because of changes in the local area. Attendance has been uniformly high over recent years and at over 96% is above the average for similar and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school provides a well-developed safe, secure, warm and stimulating environment in which students can successfully play and learn.
- Students are motivated to engage in and enjoy learning because teachers accept that they are accountable for the quality of their teaching and students' learning.
- Teamwork and overall collaboration throughout this large school are strong.
- Parents and students love their school and therefore attendance is high.
- The school has well developed, thorough and fair hiring procedures.
- The school has clear agreed procedures and management systems that enable the school to run smoothly, be successful and continue to develop.
- There is a strong successful focus on ensuring that children succeed.
- Staff, parents and children have respect for the principal and the capacity for the school to improve is good.
- All staff have high and realistic expectations of students' attitudes, behavior and academic performance.
- The school is highly successful at putting the needs of students first.

What the school needs to improve

- Raise the level of understanding among teachers of the importance of routine and robust evaluation of the diagnostic and summative data they collect, including the use of their data to project the proportion of level 3 and 4 passes in the State tests.
- Sharpen aspects of data analysis, in particular between classes, grades and subjects, for example, to ensure the achievements projected and reached coincide with those expected by teachers.
- Consider revising the action planning process so that all members of the school receive a succinct document detailing the core goals for the forthcoming year.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

This is a good school that serves its community very well. It is a school recognized by New York State as one that is 'closing the gap'. The school has a strong focus on ensuring that students enjoy their learning and succeed academically. The work of the school over recent years has been successful in raising the achievements of all students and closing the achievement gap between different groups. The principal and assistant principals know their school very well. They visit lessons frequently, attend grade meetings and talk with individual teachers. Outcomes from such meetings are discussed and, as appropriate, taken to the cabinet meetings for further analysis. At the same time members of the cabinet such as the coaches, and staff with other key responsibilities also acquire information from across the school. Therefore there is a very good structure for ensuring that school development is based on a strong knowledge of the needs of teachers and students.

Teamwork and collaboration are strong. For example, teachers of the same grade meet frequently to discuss students' needs, curriculum issues and approaches to teaching. They use data and other information to inform their discussions. Assessment data for each topic as well as interim standardized tests are analyzed in part to help ensure that teachers know and understand the achievements being made. However, it is rare for teachers to generate specific data on students' progress, or use projected data to determine the level of correlation with State test results. The professional development program is extensive and serves teachers, and indirectly students, very well. The school Comprehensive Education Plan, although a key document with clear goals, is not a working document used in conjunction with other interim plans and discussions about school needs. However, agreed procedures and management structures allow for the smooth running of the school and its development, especially in relation to students' needs and achievement. Parents value their school and feel that it benefits the community as well as their children. Attendance is high.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school generates and uses a wide range of formative and summative data. Data collected by teachers is used at grade and cabinet meetings. There is a well-developed culture of collecting information, through teachers' assessments, standardized tests and State tests as well as further information through teacher conferencing with students. All this material is used in different ways to ensure that teachers and the cabinet members are acutely aware of the achievements being reached by students. The way in which the data is used at individual, class and grade level helps to ensure that no child is left behind.

In May 2006 the school received notification that it was one of a small percentage of schools across the State that is successfully closing the achievement gap. Close attention is paid to special education students and those who are English language learners, as well as providing a differentiated curriculum for the most able students. The high level of collaboration across the school ensures that data files are up to date and that teachers are completely aware of the steady or changing fortunes of students' achievements. As a consequence teachers individually and collectively make and agree changes to the way they might teach a topic. This means they discuss ways of using resources, exemplars and, classroom organization, for example, to ensure the most effective ways of teaching to secure students' learning.

While the school collects good data overall, it is less thorough in its analysis of class, grade or whole school data by ethnicity or gender. However, standards in English language arts and mathematics are above the average for similar and City schools with the gap closing because there is a continuing trend of fewer and fewer students only reaching level 1 with most gaining level 2 and above. While the school always compares its test results with similar schools its focus is always on continuous self-improvement and is successful in what it does to ensure improvement.

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 produces several different plans. For example, the attendance plan, and the annual Comprehensive Education Plan which contains core goals and an extensive action plan, but not a working document and therefore no interim changes to written plans occur. However, arising from the work of the administration and cabinet is a comprehensive professional development plan. While school improvement is at the heart of everything undertaken, these written plans are insufficiently sharp and concise to be especially useful working documents.

The principal acquires information and data from different grade teams. At faculty meetings and through the administration team agreed procedures are established to improve teaching and learning. Many such procedures are dealt with through the wide program of in-house professional development as well as external training all of which has a positive impact on teaching and students' achievements. The school is responsive to new findings arising from periodic analysis of different sets of data and information. The school knows how to bring about an exciting and successful climate for learning. However, some data sets, such as up to date projected grade scores and teachers' assessment of whether progress for each student has been high enough are not used.

Grade meetings are frequent. They provide a useful forum for discussion about the curriculum, teaching and how students learn. In addition they allow for special attention to be given to discussing the performance of the students in greatest need. Students who may require special support are discussed at cabinet level and if necessary, the pupil personnel team. All staff have high and realistic expectations. Students and parents talk fluently and favorably about the support they receive and what is expected of them and their children. Parents talk with teachers about their children. This ensures that both parties are aware of any issues that may help or hinder a student's progress. School systems and the analysis of information about students' achievements successfully drive

the activities of all in the school. All members of the school community work hard and collaboratively, to improve this already successful school.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The school curriculum is based on the mandated curriculum and where possible, additional programs of enrichment are a feature of the school, but this has declined in recent years. The nature of the curriculum allows for much data to be collected in statistical form and in prose. Good quality teaching ensures that children thrive in a rich, safe and stimulating environment where their needs are central to the way that the staff work. Teachers accept that they are accountable for the quality of their teaching and students’ learning. Teachers plan and differentiate their students’ work accordingly. They have extensive assessment records and the data arising from these is interrogated and used effectively to align their teaching so all students benefit.

The school receives a low budget by comparison to similar and City schools. While this has no detrimental affect on the above average student achievements, it has meant a narrowing of the curriculum because there is no longer an arts program. However, the budget is used efficiently and decisions drive the priorities for the school. Decisions about staffing are driven by student needs and by the school values. Scheduling reflects staff expertise across a grade. Staff are also very well supported and therefore work easily and efficiently very early in their career at the school. The wide knowledge that the administration has of the school allows scheduling to respond to student needs. Students and parents love their school. Students enjoy and are engaged by their lessons. Their academic, personal and social development are well catered for. Staff know and respect their students and are good at responding to their various needs. Student attendance is high, and the procedures used by the school in event of absence are efficient and well known by staff and parents.

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 school has thorough and fair hiring procedures which have ensured that all new staff subscribe to the school’s values and mission of putting children at the centre of learning. The administration has ensured that new teachers are well supported. A teacher mentor and ‘buddy’ system is in place, is valued and works very well to ensure that in a large elementary school all teachers feel part of the team. As a result of the induction program for new teachers as well as professional development the administration are secure in the knowledge that new staff have the support to work to agreed procedures, collect and analyze data as required. The professional development program is extensive, highly valued, well managed and efficient. Teachers know the academic program, and their role in the personal and social development of children. The school is affiliated to the Teachers’ College and receives valuable support. In addition there are several other useful external training opportunities attended by targeted staff who use the turnkey policy on return to school.

The principal and administration team frequently observe lessons. Frequent observations and discussions have secured effective methods and routines for teaching. The schools' strong culture of learning is reflected in teachers being used to observing other teachers, as well as observing the modeling of lessons.

Discussion about individual students' performance or a class or whole grade occurs at several levels throughout the school. These teams mainly use anecdotal data to inform some discussions. Routine and robust evaluation of data for planning is happening, but is relatively new.

Staff, parents and students have respect for their principal. The systems, procedures and values in place have not only maintained a high performing school, but as a consequence of this and the ability of the staff, the school has the capacity to improve even further. The school runs very smoothly and efficiently while adhering to the high expectations set by the principal. The school has links with youth development schemes that provide after school activities. Their involvement is aligned, both to the values of the school and the academic goals. Other school partnerships both serve students, but also the community of parents.

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 is good at ensuring the needs of all students are catered for. Revisions of written plans or rigorous forms of evaluation of action plans based on an appraisal of whether specific goals have been met does not occur. The school is clear about the direction it is moving and what it needs to do to improve, however, the full range of techniques available to the school to complete such evaluations are not fully in place. For example, there is no specific action plan which includes specific strategies for improvement or success criteria upon which progress can be evaluated.

As a result of the school's management systems and agreed procedures, students' achievements within classrooms and grades are assessed and interventions made when necessary. Teachers frequently use diagnostic assessment data to show whether progress is being made, although they do not always indicate whether the progress has been sufficient. Such use of diagnostic data leads to revisions being made to original plans. Such revisions are always in the interests of students and the continued development of their courses. It means that sometimes students are targeted, or new methods of teaching a topic agreed, or that training is required for an individual teacher or possibly the whole grade team. At class level it is diagnostic data that drives change, whereas at grade team meetings, it is more anecdotal evidence based on such data that influences development. In both circumstances revisions help ensure that original goals are met.

The administration knows the strengths and areas for development of their school, and this is a result of them knowing their staff extremely well. The quality of self-evaluation is satisfactory and improving. However, while there is little written evidence of specific evaluation of the action plans, the cabinet, through the administration show flexibility to re-align approaches to teaching or use of resources to aid student improvement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: George H Lindsay School (Public School 250)	∅	✓	+
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	