



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Marine Park School

Intermediate School 278

**1925 Stuart Street
Brooklyn
NY 11229**

Principal: Debra Garofalo

**Dates of review: September 27 – 29 and October 2,
2006**

Reviewer: Lysbeth Bradley

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Marine Park serves nearly 1200 students from grades 6 through 8 and is frequently oversubscribed. In recent years the intake has become more diverse to include a wider ethnic mix of children, a number of whom travel a significant distance each day. About half the students are Black, a third White and the remainder Hispanic and Asian. The percentage of special education students is higher than average; however, in line with its policy to include as many students as possible in general education with their peers, the school has fewer full-time and more part-time participants and moves more students from full-time to part-time participation than other schools. A small number of students are English language learners. The school's attendance rates have been similar to other schools in the City, but now show clear signs of improvement because of the emphasis the school places on encouraging 100% attendance.

The school is a model site for literacy, academic intervention and music. The curriculum is designed around academies and its flexible organization enables staff to make timely adjustments to the content and context of individual student's learning programs as they move from grade to grade. The classes that students are admitted to in grade 6 provide the right level of challenge for different aptitudes, interests and abilities and include classes for gifted and talented students and self-contained classes to nurture those students who need support in learning how to learn. The school has an innovative law program that is key to developing students as young citizens. It has valuable partnerships with a number of academic institutions and community organizations.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has proven ability in managing change through creating a supportive learning environment for children and staff.
- Leadership is effective at all levels in encouraging high expectations of children's learning and behavior.
- The school is especially effective in meeting the social, emotional and academic needs of those children with the greatest barriers to learning.
- The open school climate encourages children to attend school regularly, to want to learn, to respect each other and to behave well.
- Every member of staff is involved in ensuring that the school is a safe and secure place to learn.
- Senior staff make good use of a wide range of data to promote progress for children of all abilities.
- The school has established a broad curriculum that addresses different needs, interests and aptitudes.
- There is well-established teamwork at grade and faculty level to support collaborative planning.
- Many students reach high levels of competence in playing a musical instrument in one or more of the school's bands.
- The strong partnership between staff and parents is reflected in important aspects of the school's work.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that students in Grade 8 make the same rate of progress as students in Grades 6 and 7.
- Improve the rigor in monitoring and evaluating the impact of instructional practice on students' learning in order to spread good practice and ensure greater consistency across classes and grades.
- Require that lesson planning includes activities that develop a wider range of learning styles to take better account of different needs and abilities within the same classroom.
- Find manageable ways of involving all staff in setting achievement targets linked to the school's priorities and academic goals.
- Sharpen the monitoring and evaluating of the impact of instructional practice on learning outcomes for students.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school with several significant strengths.

In the six years since her appointment, the principal has been successful in making Marine Park a place where staff enjoy coming to work, where children want to learn and where teachers constantly reflect on what works for individual children and why. The principal provides sensitive and purposeful leadership. She is uncompromising in her quest for excellence and has the full support of her staff in aiming high. She knows her fellow administrators very well and delegates very effectively.

The cabinet is not complacent in its pursuit of achieving the school's goals and constantly questions the difference its actions make for groups of students and for individuals. To this end, the school's emphasis on the effective development and use of internal qualitative and quantitative data has been key to year-on-year improvement. The school's greatest strength lies in the detailed picture it builds up of each of its students with additional learning needs. This enables teachers to draw on a comprehensive range of programs in order to put together tailor-made personal intervention plans. These flexible plans are almost always successful in raising the self-esteem of its most needy students and enabling them to improve on their standards.

The areas for improvement identified in this report are mainly issues which the school has identified for further work but has not yet mapped out plans for action. However, the principal has already begun to consider ways of tackling the need to make whole school planning more relevant to teachers in the classroom. The school has a strong capacity for further improvement.

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

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

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

The school uses a wide range of assessments and tests to provide teachers with as full a picture as possible of each one of its students. The principal and assistant principals are not only concerned to track the standards that students reach each year, but also to track the rate of progress over time of individuals and groups of students. The principal ensures that her senior staff and the school leadership team have access to a comprehensive range of information and are able to interpret the data accurately in order to make the right decisions when allocating resources and planning learning programs.

The school has been particularly successful in developing qualitative assessments for its special education students and in evaluating the impact of its intervention programs on a regular basis to check the extent that individual students are benefiting. The school has a

clear policy for tracking every student throughout the year and timely contact is made with parents during each marking period to address any concerns.

Although results remain below those of similar schools, the number of students gaining levels 3 and 4 overall has increased year on year and the numbers failing to reach level 2 has halved. The results of Grade 8 students do not follow this trend and the school has correctly identified the need to focus on raising the achievement of this grade level. It has recognized the need to develop activities that acknowledge the different ways in which groups of students learn best.

The school interprets the data well for multiple purposes. Evaluation of the impact of instructional practice on learning has shown that the higher levels that grade 8 Hispanic students reach in science are directly attributable to the 'hands on' approach to learning that makes the subject meaningful and promotes greater understanding.

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 has well-established organizational structures that encourage collaborative working at grade and faculty level in developing the curriculum and assessment. The good level of trust that exists between staff means that teachers are not afraid to reflect on their practice and make changes. Meetings are well led and enable staff to engage in honest discussion which focuses on what is best for the student, and to agree points for action. The school has gone a long way in establishing consistency in terms of subject content and the pace of learning, but has not achieved the same level of quality or consistency in lesson planning. Although the school has a clearly articulated Comprehensive Education Plan, the principal is rightly concerned that teachers do not understand well enough how it relates to the work they do in the classroom.

The literacy and mathematics coaches play a valuable role in ensuring that the school's programs for balanced literacy and mathematics link with the learning objectives in other subjects and that the programs are fine tuned in the light of available data. The two coaches work in close collaboration and their understanding of how their subject responsibilities interrelate makes a significant contribution to the school's efforts in raising standards.

The assistant principal with responsibility for special education students works very closely with the two coaches and has been instrumental in developing the school's intervention programs which make a real difference for students in greatest need of improvement. School leaders are assiduous in checking on the progress these students are making and are not afraid to make changes if one strategy is shown not to work. They believe that every child has the ability to succeed if they can be helped to find the key that opens the door to learning. The school recognizes that its success in this area has shown it how to effect improvement in other areas.

The school communicates clearly with parents and involves them from the start in their child's learning. Parents appreciate the ready access they have to staff and the timeliness with which teachers let them know of any concerns.

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.

The school has given considerable thought to expanding the opportunities within the curriculum so that it has both relevance and interest for its diverse population of students. For instance, law students act as arbitrators in the student court to which grievances are brought. Students in all academies and classes benefit from the school’s strong emphasis on balanced literacy and the recognition of its importance in promoting knowledge and skills in every subject. Flexible organization enables students to move between academies and classes if this will help accelerate their learning. The school aims to provide students with rich experiences of the Arts. A significant number of students have achieved success in learning to play one or more musical instruments and the symphonic, concert, jazz and marching bands have performed with distinction at notable venues in New York City.

Although the school’s organization of academies and classes enables teachers to provide the right level of challenge overall for students on a class by class basis, not all teachers have given sufficient thought to how students of different abilities within the same class can be helped to reach their potential. Some teachers are more successful than others in adapting activities within the classroom to take account of the different ways in which students learn best and to set targets for groups and individuals that build on what they already know and can do.

The school has well-developed structures for supporting the social and personal development of its students. In assigning the most vulnerable students to classes, administrators understand how important it is to place each child with the teacher who is most likely to bring out the best in them. The principal has established very good procedures for promoting good attendance and for reducing instances of lateness. The guidance counselors ensure that every student has someone to turn to and the well-developed system of peer mediation not only limits instances of bullying and bad behavior, but enables all students involved to grow in their understanding of how to relate to their peers.

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 a well-established team of staff, which has been enabled to grow under the principal’s leadership. They fully support her in striving for excellence and understand precisely what she is aiming to achieve. They endorse the importance that she places on morality, standards and autonomy in enabling students to reach their potential. Administrators and teachers are encouraged to think critically and to encourage their students to pose questions. Experimentation is encouraged when it is underpinned by academic rigor.

Professional development is seen as key in the school's drive to raise standards. Opportunities are created for teachers to work collaboratively and to learn from each other. Professional development is closely aligned to the school's goals and priorities for improvement.

The cabinet knows the capabilities of each individual staff member well. They acknowledge that although there is a comprehensive program of classroom observation followed by discussion of what was effective and where improvements could be made, there is room to improve the way in which administrators and teachers are enabled to measure the impact of instructional practice on learning outcomes for students.

The principal has been successful in taking the staff with her in changing the school for the better. This has been brought about by listening to what her staff has to say and in enabling all members of staff, whatever their level of responsibility and experience, to play a part in decision-making. The school runs smoothly because its procedures are continuously evaluated and the opinions of all members of staff are sought and valued. School leaders are not afraid to admit that something is not working as intended and to make mid-course adjustments in the light of objective evidence.

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.

This is a school where reflection and self-review is an integral part of the culture. Staff and students are committed to lifelong learning. Staff teams frequently use the available data to review how successful their plans have been in achieving their stated goals. The comprehensive education plan provides a sharp analysis of data to identify where gains have been made and which groups of students need to be targeted to accelerate progress. The plan is not so clear in identifying curricular targets, in planning how the outcomes resulting from individual faculty action plans will be measured or in evaluating their impact on students' progress.

The use of data informs decision-making on a day-to-day basis and senior staff are constantly evaluating the data and looking to link cause and effect. A strong emphasis is placed on the development of objective and reliable methods of diagnostic assessment to enable the school to compare outcomes across grades, subjects, classrooms and groups. Staff understand the usefulness of objectively retrieved and up-to-date information in planning the next steps for individuals and groups.

One of the school's greatest strengths lies in the flexibility with which it realigns the curriculum and the way learning is organized to respond to the identified needs of individuals and groups of students through both summative and formative assessment. The school readily acknowledges that it is at its most effective in identifying how to accelerate the learning of its most needy students and plans to put the same emphasis on enabling level 3 students to become level 4 students and in providing a stimulating and enriched curriculum to challenge its level 4 students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Marine Park School (IS 278)	∅	✓	+
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