



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Middle School for Academic and Social Excellence

Middle School 334

**1224 Park Place
Brooklyn
NY 11213**

Principal: Kathleen Clarke-Glover

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Reviewer: Jean Mackie

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school is located in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn. It shares a building with a number of other schools. There are 170 students enrolled covering grades 6 and 7. The school population is predominantly Black (84%) with 11% Hispanic students. Two percent of students are White and the remaining 3% are either of Asian or from other ethnic groups. Approximately 15% are special education students and 5% are English language learners. The school is Title 1 eligible.

Middle School 334 opened as a grade 6 through 8 school in 2005 and is now in its second year. The attendance rate in 2006 was approximately 92%. At present there is no comparative data with similar or City schools. Quite a number of the staff have less than three years' teaching experience.

This is an empowerment school. These schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides clear direction and leadership to the school.
- There is a strong commitment to developing the academic, social and emotional well-being of all students.
- Data is used well to track and monitor the progress of the students.
- Academic intervention programs are well focused and based carefully on identified student needs.
- The literacy and mathematics coaches are providing good guidance and support to the staff.
- There is a strong focus on professional development which is well informed by both individual and whole school needs.
- There are some good examples of lively instruction which capture the interest of the students.
- The students value the support of staff and the guidance that they provide.
- The school provides a safe and secure learning environment.
- Students enjoy coming to school as reflected by the good attendance.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue professional development to ensure that assessments made by teachers are increasingly reliable and that systems for recording data are more consistent.
- Continue the support for teachers in using data to inform differentiation in the classroom, especially for those students identified as having particular needs.
- Refine the current data analysis to ensure that the relative progress of subgroups such as boys and girls is tracked more systematically.
- Establish more concrete interim goals so that periodic assessments can be used more effectively to track progress towards the longer term goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan.
- Ensure that the impact of the professional development program on instructional practice and student outcomes is monitored more systematically.
- Continue the efforts to strengthen parental engagement in students' learning.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal's strong drive and energy have underpinned the development of this new school. There are high expectations for students, teachers and parents. The strong community climate within the school promotes positive relationships between students and adults. Clear procedures have been established for collecting data on achievement, attendance and behavior so that the school is able to track and monitor the overall progress and development of students. A good start has been made in the use of periodic assessments. Information is used well to inform the curriculum and intervention strategies for individuals in need. Students, very largely, enjoy their lessons, particularly when the instruction is lively and challenging. Both students and parents value the safe and secure environment provided by the school. Professional development is a strong feature and is well focused on areas of need. The principal and her team are aware of the challenges ahead and are taking well-considered actions to plan for the next stage of development of the school.

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

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has quickly established some good systems for tracking and monitoring the performance of the students in the school. The students' test results from their previous schools have been analyzed carefully to identify baseline standards so that the school has a clear picture of needs and the students' starting points. Analysis has identified a high proportion of students entering the school on levels 1 and 2 in both English language arts and mathematics. Test results have been scrutinized at subject, class and grade level and shared with the staff so that all are aware of the overall achievement of the students and the progress made in the first year. A range of diagnostic assessments has been used well to identify weaknesses in specific skill areas, such as number sense in mathematics, where students' competence levels are in particular need of improvement.

Individual students' progress is tracked carefully. Special education students and English language learners are quickly identified so that appropriate interventions can be provided for them. The school is particularly concerned about the number of overage students, mainly boys, who entered the current grade 6 and has established a focused program to track and monitor their progress over time. Teachers maintain a wide range of ongoing assessments of students' work. At present, however, the systems adopted lead to some variability in the level of detail at which progress and achievement are recorded.

In addition to performance data, the school also monitors behavior and attendance closely, being aware of the close links between attitudes to school and academic success. It is appropriately focused on tracking trends over time, even though data at present is limited. It is difficult at this early stage for the school to make comparisons with performance in

similar schools. The school has been well focused on scrutinizing data at individual level and is aware that, as numbers increase, it will need to look in increasing detail at the relative performance of sub groups such as boys and girls and different ethnic groups.

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 proficient.

The strong commitment to developing the academic, social and emotional well-being of all students underpins the high aspirations of the school. The development of the current Comprehensive Education Plan was a collaborative exercise involving both staff and the administration, ensuring that there is a shared understanding of what the school is trying to achieve for its students. A range of data, including achievement on entry, has been used well to determine challenging goals for the future. This information has been translated by both the literacy and mathematics coaches into clear plans of action at departmental level, which in turn has informed goals and actions at class level.

Performance data has been instrumental in informing the configuration of the classes within the school so that an appropriate curriculum can be provided for them. Quantitative and qualitative data is scrutinized regularly to ensure that appropriate plans and actions are in place to support special education students, English language learners and other students who have been identified as in need of additional help with their studies. Academic intervention programs are subsequently well focused and based carefully on identified student needs. Students are helpfully supported in reviewing progress towards their goals through discussions with teachers and through feedback on their work.

The school has actively shared its high expectations with parents through regular newsletters and a range of materials sent home monthly. Report cards display the achievement and progress of the students and also identify future goals. Parent teacher conferences and special workshops provide good opportunities for parents to play an active part in the goal setting process and to find out more about how they can support their children at home. At present the school is concerned about the number of parents who are not fully engaged in their children’s learning and is taking active steps to tackle this issue.

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 proficient.

The school has developed a curriculum which meets statutory requirements and is well matched to the needs of the students, with a strong focus on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills. Periodic assessments have been used well to monitor the progress towards goals and have led to readjustments in the program this year. Enrichment activities such as chess, drama and martial arts are appreciated by the students and underpin the school’s aim of developing well-rounded individuals.

Teachers, very largely, are aware of their accountability for the outcomes of the students in their care and work hard to do their best for them. With the support from the literacy and mathematics coaches, they use data and the State standards to inform their planning so that work is suitably matched to the needs of the class as a whole. The skills of teachers to use the data in a more sophisticated way to inform differentiation within the classroom are variable at present. Nevertheless, there are some good examples of lively instruction which captures the interest of the students and engages them. One student in a mathematics class said that 'The teacher makes learning fun.'

The school uses performance data and a range of other assessments well to allocate both resources and staffing to the identified needs of the students. Subject expertise has been systematically built up in line with the increasing numbers of classes and additional special needs support has also been introduced. Scheduling has similarly been carefully planned, with additional time allocated for literacy and mathematics, for example.

The small community ensures that students and adults know each other very well. The students value the support of the staff and the guidance that they provide. They feel safe and secure and are happy to approach adults with any worries or concerns. Students judge that their views are important to the school and welcomed the recent student survey. Although the school has had good attendance figures, it is not complacent and has established rigorous systems to tackle both absenteeism and lateness to school.

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 principal provides clear direction and leadership. She is well respected for the way in which her vision has underpinned the development of the school and shows strong capacity to effect further change. Good systems have been established to ensure that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Plans for hiring the new staff required to meet the needs of the extra grade next year are well underway. The school is clear about the skills required, which include middle school experience, a commitment and energy to meet the needs of the students and high expectations. The ability to use data to inform instructional practice is also important.

Performance data, lesson observations and discussions with staff are used well to prioritize areas for professional development. The school has recognized the need to support staff to ensure that assessments made in class are consistently reliable and that the data is then used more systematically to inform differentiated instruction. The literacy and mathematics coaches are providing good guidance and support to the staff both on an individual basis and during departmental meetings, particularly in these areas. External consultant advice in mathematics has also been well focused.

Common planning time is appreciated by staff for the regular opportunity provided to share and evaluate practice. Feedback from the formal and informal classroom observations undertaken by the principal and coaches is found to be helpful and constructive. Teachers are becoming increasingly skilled as a result of all of these activities and improvements in results have been noted recently. However, the school does not systematically evaluate the impact of professional development on instructional practice and student outcomes.

The school is in the process of establishing links with groups such as the Brooklyn Music and Arts after school team. The principal is eager to ensure that the vision for the new school is firmly embedded before forging additional partnerships to ensure that the collaboration is truly focused on the aims and goals of the school.

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 has developed an ambitious Comprehensive Education Plan with goals that not only quantify gains in overall achievement levels but also identify the specific skill areas in need of improvement. Clear structures have been established to ensure that these strategic goals are under regular review at whole school, department and class level. The periodic assessments in English language arts and mathematics, for example, have been used to measure progress towards the goals set and, as a result, adjustments to the departmental action plans have been made. As yet, the school has not established firm interim goals that would enable it to use the periodic assessments more easily to monitor and track progress towards the longer term goals.

The work of the school is discussed regularly through the various team meetings. The small size and number of staff ensures that there is effective communication about what is working well and areas for improvement. This process has been enhanced through a recent staff survey. Performance, attendance and other qualitative data is used constructively to inform progress with initiatives. This analysis results in adjustments to the curriculum, where it is needed. The tracking of special education students, English language learners and those at risk of not reaching the expected standards, leads to the refinement of individual targets and realignment of intervention programs as required. Teachers, along with the two coaches, use data to review the overall impact of instructional programs and consider refinements on a regular basis as a result.

The principal and her team know the strengths and areas for development of the school well. They recognize what needs to be done and have established some good systems to support the future development of the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Middle School for Academic and Social Excellence (MS 334)	∅	✓	+
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	