



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Midwood High School

High School 405

**2839 Bedford Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11210**

Principal: David Cohen

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Reviewer: Denis Pittman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Midwood High School at Brooklyn College is a secondary school of approximately 3700 students. The ethnic composition of the school is 39% Black, 25% Asian, 24% White, 9% Hispanic and 3% other ethnic backgrounds. There are relatively few special education students (4%) and similarly few English language learners (3% of students). Attendance levels are broadly in line with city figures but marginally below that of similar schools.

Midwood High School is an empowerment school. Empowerment 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 new principal has brought a vision and energetic leadership to the school, which is building upon its successful background.
- The students' achievement is high and continues to improve.
- The relationship between students and staff is very positive and students value the support and guidance given to them.
- There is a strong sense of community in the school, which promotes its unique family-like atmosphere.
- The school has an inclusive philosophy, which is geared to meeting the individual needs of students regardless of academic ability, ethnicity or gender.
- The school has successfully established high expectations of students' academic performance and individual responsibilities,
- There is a strong team ethos amongst the staff, which reflects the significant commitment to student-support programs, high quality professional development and extracurricular activities.
- The curriculum has an outstanding breadth and diversity, which challenges students and effectively promotes their learning experiences.
- The school has very good relationships with other educational institutions and support agencies to enhance the learning opportunities of students.
- Parents support the school and appreciate the progress their children make.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop teachers' competencies to analyze data and use periodic assessment to plan the curriculum and instruction.
- Continue to develop procedures and strategies to evaluate goals and long-term plans, particularly for sub-groups of students.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

Midwood High School is high performing school. It challenges its students to succeed through three programs, the Medical Science Institute, the Humanities program and the Collegiate program. The new principal is building effectively upon a successful culture to promote even higher levels of expectation and achievement. These expectations are set within a community spirit, which strongly supports students and teachers. Relationships between students and adults in the school are excellent. The students are highly motivated and keen to participate in all aspects of school life. The curriculum is innovative and has its emphasis upon academic rigor. It successfully develops students to have an opinion of their own but respect the views of others. The teachers have a high degree of expertise. Lessons are well prepared to emphasize challenge in students' learning.

The school provides a substantial range of clubs and activities to broaden the learning experience of students. Notable among these, is the highly successful athletics program. The willingness of staff to support this and similar programs indicates their high levels of commitment to the school and the students. The parents greatly value the support and guidance, which the school gives to their children. They strongly endorse its openness and willingness to communicate, which are notable features of the school's administration. The school has a significant capacity to sustain and build upon its current high reputation.

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 uses a wide range of standard tests and assessments, which it compiles to provide data on the academic and personal development of all the students. It analyzes the Regents examinations outcomes to identify trends and potential areas for improvement. The school performs extremely well compared to State standards in its selective programs but identifies the academic progress of the lower third of its Collegiate program cohort as a focus for improvement. The school generates substantial assessment data from its curriculum programs. These data are effectively supplemented by periodic assessments, such as the Princeton Review, for mathematics and English Language and Arts.

The formative assessment of students, compiled by teachers, is detailed and comprehensive. The school undertakes systematic analyses of test items to identify competencies, which need to be developed, as for example, the achievement of English language learners in mathematics. Subject leaders and administrators analyze variations in performance to identify patterns and trends in students' achievement.

The school understands well, the trends shown by the data for the different ethnic groups. The teaching of English language learners is good. The analysis of their needs is detailed and provides good information for teachers to amend their programs of instruction, where

necessary. The special education inclusion program is very strong. The co-teaching, by a general education and special education teacher enables secure diagnostic information and data to be collected about the needs of these students. This is used well to schedule the specific instructional needs of students. Staff are provided with informative summaries of the students' individual education plans to add to their data profiles.

The analysis of the school's data is robust and rigorous. The careful scrutiny of data enables the school's leaders to identify clearly other areas of focus. The comparison of performance with similar schools is a strong feature. The school's pattern of high achievement provides a target, which the school works hard to emulate and improve upon.

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 determines its goals collaboratively. These are regularly referred to at department meetings and underpin improvements to the curriculum and the quality of teaching. For example, a negative trend in the data of Collegiate science classes stimulated a redesign of this curriculum area. The school also targeted improvements in students' engagement and critical thinking. Its success in this was seen clearly in a grade 9 drama class, where students enjoyed scripting and video editing their performances.

The school, through its empowerment status, has set up an initiative to monitor and improve the performance of 30 underachieving students. In addressing this issue, the team analyzed data and provided intensive mentoring for this subgroup. Initial positive outcomes are tentative and further work is planned to establish strategies with wider application. This work illustrates how the school continually explores ways to improve its practice and address issues for students who most need to improve.

The principal and staff have very high expectations, which are clearly communicated to all. This message is conveyed through well-organized induction sessions with students, parents, teachers and guidance staff. The schools' culture also promotes the commitment to high expectations with regular reference to its core values of honesty, respect and responsibility. An explicit focus on college entrance sends a clear message about student expectation. Successes and achievements are widely celebrated.

The parents value and appreciate the school's commitment to challenge and performance. They school keeps them well informed through e-mails, surveys and workshops. Regular conferencing involves students and parents closely in setting individual targets. Regularly articulated goals and objectives strongly drive the work of the whole school community.

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 regularly checks the curriculum to ensure that as a whole and for subjects, it aligns with State standards. Innovations or adjustments such as changes in the science program and the English language learner's programs are evaluated carefully against the

school's goals and objectives. Within departments, data is used well to identify adjustments that are needed to the curriculum or in the use of time.

Teachers respond very well to the principal's central focus of improving the quality of instruction. Staff work effectively in teams, share good practice and look for ways to improve students' learning. Collaborative team teaching by special education and general education teachers is helping all students to achieve, through teaching that is tailored specifically to their needs. Data is used well to track students' progress, for example through the literacy support program.

The school uses its budget well to support instruction as for example, in the purchase of computerized whiteboards. There is also a significant financial commitment to support programs for Regents tutoring, a Saturday lessons for English language learners and instructional software. The school hired additional staff to facilitate planning and promote co-teaching for special education students. The assistant principals effectively guide the growth of strong departmental teams.

Scheduling decisions reflect students' requirements. For example, the school restricts class sizes to promote its inclusion strategy. This successfully enhances social cohesion and accelerates student's progress.

There is a strong sense of enthusiasm, collaborative learning and family community. There is mutual respect between students and staff and the students value the support and guidance, which they receive from all members of staff. They find their lessons stimulating and challenging and are strongly encouraged to be independent thinkers and learners. They talk openly about their positive experiences at the school.

The school gives attendance high priority. The commitment of the students to the school is reflected in the high attendance rates.

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 turnover of staff is low. There is a long tradition of staff remaining at the school or former students returning as teachers. The school carefully selects staff using specific criteria, mainly related to a passion for learning, an ability to work as a team member and ability to use data to set high enough challenges for students' achievement. The school hires staff who share its values and it successfully maintains and builds staff commitment.

Professional development programs have a clear focus and link well to the training requirements of the curriculum. For example, there is professional development on differentiating instruction and student engagement to help staff become autonomous learners. Professional development helps staff improve their skills in analyzing a range of contextualized data to effectively promote improvements in students' learning.

The cabinet has focused strongly on promoting coaching for learning. This has successfully raised the confidence and competence of staff. In the short period the principal has been at the school, he has earned the respect of the staff for his instructional and professional expertise, often taking the lead in professional development with the whole faculty. He has created a supportive environment where staff feel valued.

The administrative team regularly observe teaching and give staff constructive feedback. The team has a good understanding of the teachers' strengths and areas for development and uses this information effectively to drive professional development. The teachers plan collaboratively and there is an extensive program of meetings, which allows the staff to share their ideas and expertise. This close cooperation has made a clear impact on improving students' achievement. There are well-established and frequent opportunities for teachers to visit each other's classes and to model and develop ideas.

The school has effective procedures to ensure that it runs smoothly. Students know where to go and what to do. The school works well with outside institutions and maintains strong ties with numerous universities, which further enhances learning opportunities.

The school welcomes students, parents and visitors. The school very successfully promotes parent participation in school life through its open style of communication.

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 effectively uses data to evaluate and analyze its progress towards its long-term and short-term goals. Data on credit accumulation, class grades, Regents results, attendance rates, extended day results, contribute to the process. The leadership team meets regularly to consider students' progress and to focus intervention strategies for students or to determine support for teachers. The regular reporting cycles provide additional evidence of students' progress and indicate where interventions are needed. For example, the coaches continually monitor the academic progress of the students involved in the prestigious athletics program. If there is slippage, then a student's continued involvement in the program is reviewed.

Data is used well to evaluate the progress of specific students groups but is not used as effectively to identify trends in progress of sub-groups of students or to make and adjust specific plans for such groups. The school has shown its adaptability through the changes, which it has implemented to the science curriculum and the renewed focus on the performance of lower achieving students in the Collegiate program. The integration of the collaborative teaching program too, has required staff to adjust their teaching strategies.

The staff have a clear understanding of the goals and core purposes, which drive the school's work. Their strong commitment to the specific needs of all students is manifested in the way staff support each other and engage in the extended day activities and the extracurricular program. The school has a good capacity to consolidate its achievements and develop further.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Midwood High School (HS 405)	∅	✓	+
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	