



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

New Horizons Middle School

Middle School 442

**317 Hoyt Street
Brooklyn
NY 12231**

Principal: Mary Lou Aranyos

Dates of review: April 19 - 20, 2007

Reviewer: Maggie Hollingsworth

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

New Horizons is a middle school for students from grade 6 through grade 8 which serves students from the communities of Red Hook, Boerum Hill, Park Slope, Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, Crown Heights, Bedford-Stuyvesant and East New York. Of the 228 students enrolled, 48% are Hispanic, 43% are Black, 7% are White and less than 2% are Asian or from other groups. Three percent of students are English language learners. The proportion of special education students, 53%, is higher than in similar schools and schools City-wide. Almost 66% of students have Title 1 eligibility which is close to the average for City middle schools. Attendance, at 89.7%, is close to the average for similar schools and for City schools. The number of suspensions has dropped sharply in recent years from 87 in 2005 to single figures in the current year. The school uses collaborative team teaching, instructing students from the academically gifted to those with special needs together for all their lessons.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a very clear vision for the school which is shared with and supported by the whole school community.
- The principal monitors the quality of teaching regularly and rigorously and has an excellent knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses.
- A good range of professional development has improved classroom instruction and the management of students' behavior.
- Leaders, teachers and paraprofessionals share ideas and work together productively to plan lessons and assess students' learning.
- The school uses a wide range of data on students' achievements to understand how individuals and groups of students are performing.
- There is excellent teaching in some classrooms that helps students of all abilities make good progress.
- The school is very successful in promoting students' personal and social development and improving their attitudes to work.
- Close links with outside agencies and partner organizations are used well to extend the curriculum and provide interesting and motivating contexts for the students' learning.
- Parents are very well informed about the curriculum and instruction in the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the leisurely pace of learning in some lessons.
- Differentiate instruction more consistently to meet the wide range of needs in each classroom.
- Balance the strong focus on the students' personal and social development with an equal emphasis on their academic progress when planning, delivering and evaluating lessons.
- Provide more challenging work for higher achieving students and expect more of them.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

New Horizons Middle is a proficient school. Despite a high turnover of staff, which is due to the school's success in promoting and developing its teachers, the school runs smoothly and is well led and managed. The school has a higher than average proportion of students whose achievement is below grade. It serves many of these students well but it does not yet do enough for higher performing students, who sometimes mark time in lessons and do not achieve as well as they should.

The school is committed to developing students who are self motivated learners. Classroom organization, the curriculum and instructional methods are aligned well to encourage students to learn by doing and develop a broad range of personal skills that equip them for adult life. The students grow in confidence and self esteem and most enjoy their lessons.

Collaborative team teaching is well established. While some instruction is excellent, there is room for improvement in the way the teachers match the work to meet the needs of the full range of students in each class.

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 develops a clear understanding of the students' performance through its analysis of data from standardized tests, regular teacher assessments, student portfolios and records of students' attendance and behavior. The principal has also compared results with those of other schools, although there are few with similarly high proportions of special education students. Senior leaders analyze the statistics for patterns and trends over time and often present the information to staff in graphs and tables so that everyone understands which students, groups or grades are doing better than others and where improvements need to be made. Teachers create and use rubrics effectively to assess which level each student has reached in a given subject, and update their assessment folders daily. Results of tests in reading are collated onto a color coded spreadsheet which shows, at a glance, which individuals are making the expected progress each semester, how many have reached grade level and which classes and grades are performing best.

The school has used its own data particularly well to analyze the relative progress of special education students and those in general education classes. When it found that the students in general education were making less progress than their peers, it refocused its classroom observation and professional development on addressing the issue. The relative progress of girls and boys is similarly analyzed and, when girls in grade 7 were seen to be falling behind, a separate 'New Horizon's girls group' was established to give

them a forum to work together. The progress of English language learners and of the most able is also analyzed, although in these cases the school's strategies for improvement are less well developed and relatively little attention is given to the academic performance of students from 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.

Using the data from tests and other assessments, the principal and her cabinet devise the long and short term goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan and set specific benchmarks and target dates to achieve them. The plan is detailed and includes goals for each subject as well as whole school issues such as increasing the amount of accountable talk in lessons. The goals are reviewed each quarter and adjusted in the light of the data collected and the progress made. This cycle has been used to inform strategic decisions such as the program of professional development and the pacing calendar for subjects.

As part of the school's commitment to collaborative teaching, lessons are regularly planned and reviewed in teams. Discussions focus on whole class and the progress of individual students and identify the barriers to learning and what needs to be taught next. Where there are concerns, a team of teachers and other professionals meets weekly to offer suggestions on the action that should be taken. Staff often identify where a student is falling behind but the school recognizes they do not always place sufficient emphasis on the pace of lessons when seeking solutions.

Teachers assess the students' work regularly and conference with the students on what they could do better, routinely seeking the students' views on what they find easy and where they need help. This was well done in one classroom where the teacher engaged her students in an extended written dialogue about how improvements could be made but in some other lessons the students only wrote about what they felt about the work and did not include what they had achieved.

There is a well documented 'Parent Policy' that includes the school's goals for improving students' performance and sets out the expectations of the school for students and parents. Regular workshops for parents and a monthly newsletter from the parent coordinator keep parents informed and secure their support.

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 curriculum is carefully designed to meet mandatory requirements while providing a wide range of opportunities for the students' personal and social development. Concerns that many students were not engaging sufficiently with academic work have led to the introduction of more projects and inquiry based work, including instructional partnerships with Arts Connection, Good Shepherd, the Red Hook Health Initiative and the LINC Team Tutoring program. The students appreciate the opportunities that the range of field trips

and community service has brought and the students' increased self esteem and growing confidence in speaking about their work is testimony to its success. The school's own drive to increase the amount of time students spend working in small mixed groups is a further example of the staff's commitment to aligning instruction to an active learning style. There is, however, too little focus on the students' academic achievement.

The school adapts the subject curriculum and resources well to meet the needs of special education students in each class. When the school's analysis of data showed that lower achieving students were falling behind in mathematics and that, in particular, the language in the books they were using was too difficult, the school reviewed instruction, purchased simpler texts and put in place a supporting program of professional development.

The school's commitment to collaborative team teaching carries with it the necessity to differentiate work in classrooms to meet the needs of a diverse range of students. While all members of staff have received substantial training for this role, some are more successful than others in putting it into practice. The pace of lessons is often leisurely and not enough is expected, especially of the higher achievers. Despite good use of the budget to provide workshops on differentiation and a range of handbooks on the topic for teachers to borrow, practice is still too inconsistent and students are not being sufficiently challenged in lessons.

Staff and students know each other very well and care about each other. Students and parents feel that having two teachers rather than one is a bonus because there is always someone they can talk to. Students' attitudes to school are positive and their behavior has improved, in part because of the school's consistent focus on rewarding good behavior. The students spoke warmly of the 'Bee Bucks' they earned for being 'safe, responsible, respectful and prepared'. Several were saving up their Bucks for the top reward: to be 'Principal for the Day'! Attendance is a high priority for the school, and unexplained absence is followed up rapidly.

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 principal is highly respected by staff, students and parents for her authoritative yet approachable manner. The school is well organized with responsibilities clearly defined and key leaders playing a full part. Although there has been a high turnover of staff, good teamwork keeps the school running smoothly. The principal constantly builds the capacity of the school very successfully by guiding and supporting teachers in their work. As teachers develop and are promoted; other teachers are given key roles and challenges which help their professional development. Prospective new teachers are screened carefully. They are required to teach a model lesson and to demonstrate their commitment to the philosophy of mixed ability teaching. Teachers are paired together in a classroom, often to good effect, although the principal is aware that some pairings have not developed into the partnership they should be. These pairings are reviewed regularly, using information from classroom observation and tests and assessments, to ensure that the progress of the students is maintained.

Teachers and paraprofessionals work together in class teams, collaborating formally and informally on planning and assessment tasks, sharing ideas and substituting for each other where necessary. All of these teams work to the benefit of students' personal

development but some are more successful than others in promoting the students' progress. Where classroom partnerships are less productive, teachers do not make the most of the other adults in the classroom to build the skills of the students and, in some cases, work is not matched sufficiently to the students' varied needs.

The principal observes teachers regularly, keeping a record of her findings and giving constructive critical feedback. Teachers clearly gain a lot from this, and from observing each other and teachers in other schools. The principal uses a range of information, including staff preferences, lesson observations and data on student performance and progress to assess staff needs. The resulting program of professional development has led to improvements in significant areas such as the staff's understanding of data and the quality of instruction.

A very wide range of partnerships with outside agencies helps the school to deliver its goals. The boys' basketball club, led by a teacher from another school in the building, has, for example, helped to instill respect for rules in boys who found it hard to relate to authority. Fundraising and charity work, including the recent focus on war-torn Rwanda, has helped students develop their social and moral conscience.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

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

The goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan guide the school's medium and long term planning. The goals are posted on the door of the principal's room as a constant reminder of where the school needs to aim. The school's action plans are working documents which guide the next strategic steps. Milestones and benchmarks are used appropriately to assess how far the school has moved. There are long term goals for the improvement of each subject which are measurable and achievable.

There are agreed processes for monitoring the students' progress in the short term which include the regular collection and analysis of data from tests and assessments. This helps teachers to understand which students are falling behind grade expectations and shows the principal and subject leaders where instruction needs to be improved. Teachers use checklists and conversations with coaches to identify what needs to be improved and plan timely and appropriate interventions.

The school has a clear view of how individual students are doing in comparison with others, especially those who are the most in need of help. Subject leaders and coaches have a good knowledge of the students' achievement between and within classes and of how their results compare with other schools, and plan professional development to address staff needs. The principal knows the strengths and weaknesses of her staff and of students' achievement and uses this knowledge to make the best match between teachers and classes and to inform the program of professional development. The administration continues to increase teachers' expectations of what their students can achieve. The range of data which the school holds and the detailed analysis that it makes place the school in a good position to accelerate the academic progress made by the students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| SCHOOL NAME: New Horizons Middle School (MS 442) | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 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 |