



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Margaret Douglas School

Public School 36

**123 Morningside Drive
Manhattan
NY 10027**

Principal: Cynthia Mullins-Simmons

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Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Margaret Douglas School is a pre-kindergarten through grade 2 school serving 547 students, a decline of approximately 100 since the 2003-2004 school year. The school is currently below 70% capacity. Black students represent 55% of the population while Hispanics comprise 40% of the student body. Whites and others are 5% of the population. English language learners and special education students each represent 11% of the population.

For the period 2003-2005, attendance averaged approximately 89%. This is below the average scores for City and similar schools. The school is Title I eligible. The school capitalizes on its location in the heart of historic Harlem by integrating community studies into the curriculum.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Provides strong focused, collaborative leadership for effective instruction.
- Is increasing the use of data to understand the learning needs of all children.
- Provides targeted professional development to support the implementation of the curriculum.
- Provides a friendly supportive school culture in which students, teachers and parents feel respected and valued.
- Provides specialized programs and interventions to address the broad spectrum of student's learning needs.
- Provides students with a rich array of learning experiences in the arts, science and social studies in addition to the mandated curriculum.
- Builds students appreciation for their culture and neighborhood through field trips and experiential learning.
- Includes all students in the extended day program.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to provide professional development and support for teachers for differentiating instruction to ensure that the needs of individual students are met.
- Consider reducing the frequency of pull-out programs in order to increase all students' access to the regular curriculum.
- Continue to implement the horizontal alignment of the curriculum in the tested disciplines.
- Continue developing regularly administered common grade level assessment to evaluate students' progress at each grade level and to adjust instruction.
- Continue to address the issues of student absence and tardiness.
- Further improve procedures for tracking student achievement, interventions, and program modifications.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school enjoys a prominent location and a strong reputation in the community. It is reputed that parents living outside of the zoned area may take extraordinary measures so that their children can attend Public School 36. Many parents attended the school as children and several faculty members, including the principal, have taught the children of former students. This generational knowledge contributes to the culture of family that pervades the school.

The school's analysis of student performance as measured by standardized assessments indicates that students are performing above benchmarks in English language arts and mathematics. Student achievement has increased annually over the period 2003-2006. Students receive a well rounded curriculum that is rich in the arts. Current interest from forces outside of the school in reorganizing Public School 36 to incorporate a middle school into the site have been met with concern by parents and school personnel who value the unique breadth of offerings that benefit their children.

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 effectively gathers data from commercial assessments, school programs, conference notes, running records and student journals in order to understand what each student knows. From September 2006, teachers have begun to organize student data into assessment binders. Similarly, portfolio checklists guide the selection of work for inclusion in student records. The introduction of monthly instructional tracking sheets has aided classroom teachers and administrators to monitor the progress of students' literacy skills. Progress in mathematics is monitored through assessments embedded in the Everyday Math program. The recent introduction of a common grade two 'exit' examination in mathematics is set to provide an objective measure of instructional success at Public School 36 as well as assisting the school in communicating students' progress to receiving schools. A similar assessment of student progress in science is planned.

The school gathers information about its English language learners effectively through home language surveys and tests to assess students' language proficiency. Students' instructional needs are then addressed appropriately. According to the 2004-2005 Annual Report, approximately six percent of students attain English proficiency. This percentage is in line with that of similar schools but slightly below City schools. Special education students are identified and assessed according to regulations and they are supported appropriately. Approximately two thirds of students are integrated into general education settings and this is similar to their counterparts in other schools. The school also has several pull-out programs that remove students from the classroom to receive special services. The school is aware of the differences in performance of ethnic groups but does

not yet have programs to address their specific needs. The school has not identified any further groups of special interest to the school.

The school now recognizes the value of monitoring its progress relative to similar schools but this is under developed. The school coaches generate internal reports of annual progress in English language arts and mathematics but the comparative measurement of student progress by classroom, grade level and academic content area is, as yet, only at an early stage.

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 school’s Comprehensive Education Plan contains the required components and sets forth long term measurable targets of a three percent increase in student scores in mathematics and English scores. Although the school leadership team meets monthly to discuss school issues the use of the Comprehensive Plan as a checkpoint towards progress is not a regular feature of these meetings. However, the principal’s annual goals are included in the plan and are guiding school action to align the curriculum appropriately, to develop student portfolios and to implement the mandated curriculum. The school safety plan addresses the required components which the team reviews monthly. These plans address long term rather than immediate goals for the school.

Pacing guides are increasingly used to improve the horizontal alignment of instruction. Grade specific performance indicators guide teachers’ judgment in accelerating students’ acquisition of reading skills. For 2006-2007, these grade level performance indicators set higher expectations for student achievement above those suggested by the school’s balanced literacy program. Newsletters and monthly parent information sessions communicate these expectations to parents. Furthermore, the parent’s role in building literacy is emblazoned above the entrance of the school, encouraging them to read to their children every day. The strong community bonds between home and school encourages the regular involvement of parents in planning for the needs of their children.

The school based support team meets regularly to determine necessary interventions for students. Once identified, students in greatest need of improvement are placed in the special education or English language learner program deemed appropriate. All students receive the benefits of the extended day program, increasing time on task regardless of learning needs. A network of support personnel and programs address an extensive array of student needs. Currently, the functions of the academic support team are integrated into the administrative cabinet that meets bi-weekly. Teachers consult the academic intervention specialists or the principal or assistant principal for assistance with struggling students. While this practice of addressing issues at the point of need supports immediate intervention well, the tracking of student progress is not generally formalized. As of December 2006, approximately 40% of the schools students had been identified for academic intervention services which are delivered on a pull-out basis. This high figure requires some review.

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 follows the mandated curriculum appropriately for English language arts and mathematics and bases instruction in social studies and science on State standards. Standards based pacing guides, developed for each discipline, assist in holding teachers to account for their instruction and contribute to the principal's goal of increasing the horizontal alignment of the curriculum. The administration use monthly records of students' performance in English language arts, observations and reviews of student work in portfolios and on bulletin boards to monitor adherence to the pacing guides. Increasingly, instruction is less teacher centered and this engages students more actively. Classrooms are stimulating and reflect the recent emphasis upon the visual aspects of the workshop model of instruction. Model classrooms, mathematics and literacy coaches, and science and social studies specialists support the development of more active learning and differentiated instruction. Teachers are becoming aware of the need to plan instruction based on the learning needs of their students.

The principal uses her good knowledge of student performance to inform budgetary, staffing and scheduling decisions. For example the new grade three State tests indicated higher level reading skills were expected, and as a result the school funded supporting materials to try to achieve this. The school schedule was adjusted to accommodate an earlier start time, thus incorporating the extended day while maintaining the regular dismissal time. When the need for a full time social worker emerged, the school funded a further post beyond those incorporated in entitlement grants.

The school community is nurturing and supportive. Teachers and administrators know students and their parents well. Students feel cared for and parents trust teachers and the school to care for their children. The school reaches out to families and provides, for example, necessities such as coats and uniforms when a child is not properly attired. Social service and other agencies regularly partner with the school to provide safety nets for children and their families.

Attendance remains a challenge for the school. Annual averages are generally below 90%; however, for the first three months of this academic year, student attendance was 91.2%. The attendance secretary tracks daily attendance, makes calls and visits student's homes, and collects and records medical and other notes explaining absence. Parents are reminded regularly of the importance of regular attendance and promptness.

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 has earned the respect of her colleagues as her career has advanced in the school. She and her administrative team are seen as the instructional leaders of the school and they are moving the school forward in the use of data, the alignment of the curriculum, and the differentiation of instruction. The principal expects new appointees to possess a familiarity with balanced literacy and Everyday Math and to use the assessment data embedded in these programs to plan lessons that meet the specific needs of each child. Less emphasis is placed on the candidate's capacity to compare outcomes across classrooms and schools.

The school is well organized and runs smoothly. Halls and classrooms are bright and welcoming. Bulletin boards display examples of student work. Administrators and coaches visit classrooms several times each week on an informal basis, often providing feedback with respect to instruction, assessment and adherence to pacing guides. Teachers meet in grade level teams to discuss lessons and achievement data. It is not yet common practice for teachers to observe another's classrooms although peer support may include this practice on an ad hoc basis.

The focus of professional development is based on the analysis of statistical and anecdotal data about student performance. Coaches and content specialists frequently deliver professional development through grade level meetings. Coaches work with teachers individually and provide feedback and support for the implementation of the mandated curriculum and the use of conferencing data to inform instruction. In addition, the principal leads monthly faculty conferences. Professional development on topics such as setting clear expectations for literacy and mathematics, increasing academic rigor, and thinking and problem solving in mathematics and literacy were among those addressed recently in response to identified needs and surveys of faculty interests.

The school is fortunate to have many partnerships with local cultural institutions that supplement the academic program and provide students with artistic, environmental and social awareness of themselves and their community. Activities incorporate writing, computation and creative expression in support of the students' academic growth.

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 Comprehensive Education plan, the school safety plan and the principal's annual goals express annual rather than incremental targets for improvement. The review and revision of plans for special education students is guided by the components of each plan and include, at minimum, an annual review. Similar measures of the progress of English language learners guide adjustments in their programs or services. Progress of students receiving academic intervention services is monitored by intervention specialists and decisions regarding changes in their support programs are addressed informally in consultation with the classroom teacher or through discussion at cabinet meetings.

Comparison of student progress within and across classrooms is increasing with the institution of assessment portfolios, monthly charts and instructional tracking sheets. While these practices present the foundation upon which adjustments in instruction might be based, they have not been in place for a sufficient period of time to evidence change. Pacing guides and expectations for end of unit assessment are serving to provide objective measures of progress through the curriculum. Revisions of these guides based on the results of assessments and monitoring of delivery would be premature at this time.

However, at the level of the student, daily assessment practices embedded in the delivery of the balanced literacy curriculum and supplementary literacy support programs do provide teachers with information about students understanding that increasingly guides their decisions regarding the instruction of each child. Mathematics, science and social studies curricula include less frequent assessment practices.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Margaret Douglas School (P.S. 36)	∅	✓	+
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	