



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

William J O'Shea

**Middle School 044
100 West 77 Street
New York
NY 10024**

Principal: Liza Ortiz

Dates of review: December 6 - 8, 2006

Reviewer: Mike Doran

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school is located on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. It is one of two middle schools occupying the William O'Shea complex. They share facilities that include the gymnasium, the auditorium, the cafeteria and the library. The majority of students entering sixth grade commutes from central Harlem and housing projects in surrounding neighborhoods.

The school's population of 501 students is predominantly Black (60%) and Hispanic (35%), with the remaining 5% coming from White, Asian and other backgrounds. The school has 141 special education students which is 28% of the school population. This is well above the average for similar and City schools, and the highest proportion of any school in the district. The school has 24 English language learners. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding. Attendance is improving, but is still well below City-wide and similar school averages.

Prior to the appointment of the current principal in March 2006, the school had four principals in as many years. During this period the school went through considerable turmoil.

There has been a fifty percent turnover of staff in recent months. This has brought new expertise, a sense of a 'fresh start' and an opportunity for the principal to shape a new direction for the school. However, many of the staff are new to teaching. This has placed a major pressure on professional development and on support from the more experienced members of staff and the leadership of the school.

The Parents' Association had been disbanded, and has only just been re-constituted with the support of the school's parent coordinator. Regaining the involvement of parents remains a significant challenge for the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The recently appointed principal provides good leadership to the school.
- The teaching team is professionally committed to providing the best possible education for the students.
- The school now provides a safe and supportive learning environment for the students.
- The mutually supportive staff have a systematically planned professional development program, with a generous allocation of preparation time.
- The school's academic intervention team, working closely with the Pupil Personnel Team provides effective support for students causing concern.
- The literacy and mathematics coaches provide effective subject leadership and professional support to the teams.
- The school's budgeting is closely aligned to the priorities for development identified in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan.
- The 'workshop method' of teaching being introduced across the school provides an effective lesson planning structure and makes good use of assessment data.
- The school has successfully enriched its curriculum, through external partnerships with National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the nearby Natural History Museum.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop a rigorous and consistent approach to school-based assessment to further improve planning and monitoring.
- Improve the use of data on students' performance across all subjects to rigorously plan and set challenging goals for both teaching and learning.
- Make effective use of student performance data to differentiate the instruction provided by all teachers across all subjects to ensure that instruction is matched to the learning needs and goals of each student, is professionally rigorous, and engages the students.
- Further develop the use of the 'workshop model' for teaching and learning across the school, and the use of small group work to extend opportunities for assessment and differentiation.
- Establish systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluating the progress and impact of the Comprehensive Education Plan to enable timely revision of plans at school and classroom level.
- Ensure that planning for the professional development of staff is closely aligned to the school's development priorities identified through monitoring and review..

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school with some proficient features.

In the short space of time since her appointment, the principal has given the school a clear vision and a sense of direction. She has rapidly put structures and procedures into place so that the school is now a safe and supportive environment for students and staff. A standards-based, professional development plan is already improving instruction and students are responding positively to better planned and more engaging teaching.

The areas for improvement identified in this report mainly concern the urgent need to put into place systems for gathering and using students' performance data. This means extending the analysis of data to help teachers plan more effectively, set goals and monitor progress at classroom and school level. This process has begun, driven by a committed, determined and energetic principal. It needs to gather momentum, through an effective professional development program and with the support of the district and region.

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 undeveloped.

The school collects and analyzes a wide range of data about the performance and progress of individuals and groups of students. This includes information from standardized tests, tests produced by teachers and continuous assessment during lessons. However, there is considerable variation between teachers and subjects in the collection and use of this data when planning lessons and to differentiate their teaching.

Systems for gathering data on students' achievement and progress are furthest developed in English language arts, where using the Writing, Reading, Assessment Profile has strengthened the teachers' knowledge of what students need to learn next. Gathering data in other subjects is not at this level of development. The use of technology to support teachers in their management and analysis of assessment data is undeveloped. The school also recognizes the need to develop further its initial testing at the start of each grade in order to improve curriculum and instructional planning.

The school now has a clear policy for monitoring the progress of every student throughout the year. Timely contact is made with parents during each marking period to address any concerns. Performance data, together with information about individual students' personal development, is scrutinized by grade and subject teams working in collaboration to monitor the progress of each student. Where necessary, referral is made to the academic intervention team for more detailed monitoring and support.

The cabinet, with considerable direct support from the principal, is just beginning to scrutinize the progress of students in each subject, class by class and grade by grade to inform whole-school improvement planning. The school recognizes the need to extend

data collection and analysis to sub-groups particularly special education students and English language learners.

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 undeveloped.

The school recognizes the weaknesses in its use of data from standardized tests and from the teachers’ own assessments in the classrooms. Data analysis is not sufficiently or consistently integrated into planning the students’ next steps in learning or used to set challenging goals for individuals and groups. The principal has put in place professional development programs to address these inconsistencies and to develop the skills of teachers in making effective use of data. Collaborative grade and subject level meetings now take place in common preparation time to improve team work.

The literacy and mathematics coaches play a valuable role in ensuring that the school’s programs for literacy and mathematics link with learning objectives in other subjects and contribute towards setting goals and planning next steps in learning. The two coaches increasingly work in collaboration and their understanding of how their subject responsibilities interrelate makes a significant contribution to the school’s efforts to accelerate each student’s learning.

The school’s academic intervention team, working closely with the Pupil Personnel Team, provides effective support for students causing concern. There is on-going monitoring and support for those in greatest need.

The school communicates well with parents, but learning goals for their children and the steps towards achieving them are not established clearly. The school provides a wide range of curriculum events for parents to share classroom approaches and find out about strategies that they can use at home. Parents appreciate the ready access they have to staff and the timeliness with which teachers let them know of any concerns.

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 undeveloped with some proficient features

The principal is emphasizing the need to improve the quality of lesson planning. She has introduced the ‘workshop model’, to bring structure to lessons and data-led differentiation to improve instruction. Most development has taken place in the English language arts department where small group work, such as guided reading, offers the potential for closer and more focused assessment and support for students. In other subjects, there is a lack of differentiation in instruction and an inconsistency between teachers in the use of the workshop model to structure their lessons and widen their range of teaching strategies.

Information technology is recognized as a powerful learning tool and sixth grade classes are equipped with laptops. The school successfully participates in the Jamestown program that uses computer assisted individualized learning to support small group work

led by the teacher. The school recognizes that many teachers require sustained professional development in order to implement these approaches more fully and consistently.

Attendance is improving, but is still well below City-wide and similar school averages. The students' attendance is now monitored closely and pro-actively pursued through systems recently put in place by the principal. The students are very appreciative of the principal's zero-tolerance stance that has brought stability to the school and a safe environment in which to learn. They also appreciate the openness and approachability of staff with whom they can discuss matters of personal concern. The staff know and respect their students.

The principal has aligned the school's budget to the needs of the school. She is rightly focusing the school's funding on support for individual students, the professional development of staff, and on improvement strategies and goals identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan. Knowledge and data about students' performance are only just beginning to drive key decisions for staff deployment and scheduling.

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 carefully selects staff using an appropriate range of criteria and procedures, such as modelling a lesson. Administrators and lead staff assist in conducting a rigorous interview process.

Professional development is well managed by the principal in consultation with administrators and the wider staff group. Newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school confirm that the school provides a supportive, professional environment. This has been particularly important as a large proportion of teachers have less than two years teaching experience. Discussion and debate in subject and grade teams is now an important part of professional development. The school provides a good allocation of individual planning time for teachers, with carefully scheduled time for teams to meet together. This provides a forum for planning interventions, collaborative team teaching, and revising decisions in the light of new information.

The school is becoming a more calm and orderly place, welcoming to students, parents and visitors. The principal and lead staff are well respected. They provide a positive model with their high expectations and in their care and commitment to the students and their families.

The principal and assistant principals regularly and systematically observe instructional practice and provide feedback to teachers. This in turn, informs planning for professional development which is overseen by the cabinet. The coaches follow through with professional support as appropriate.

The school is also very concerned to provide opportunities for the development of broader skills, and offers enrichment and extension activities to interest and engage the students. Partnerships with external organizations such as National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the nearby Natural History Museum, are central to the school's vision and enhance its academic program and developing out-of-school activities program. The school is one of three to be awarded the NASA Explorer School Grant.

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 undeveloped.

Staff at all levels understand that they have responsibility for assessing and analyzing students' progress, for planning, for setting goals for students, and for evaluating and revising interventions according to need. However, the school recognizes that this is not consistently carried out by all staff and across all subject areas.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is emerging as a working document which is regularly reviewed through cabinet meetings and in the principal's discussions with particular groups such as the grade and subject teams. Students are engaged in the review process and have a formal voice in decision making through their Student Council.

The school leadership team is in the process of being re-constituted and, in collaboration with the recently re-formed parents' association will have a vital role in the future monitoring of the school.

The school recognizes the need to extend the analysis and use of student performance data to monitor and adapt the plans and goals set out in the Comprehensive Education Plan. More information is needed about the comparative performance of specific student groups, and the starting points of students when considering value-added performance data.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: William J O'Shea (MS 44)	∅	✓	+
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		