



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Dr Edmund Horan School

Public School 79

**55 East 120th Street
New York
NY 10035**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 79, the Dr Edmund Horan School provides instruction for 369 special education students, from grades 6 through 12. This includes students who remain at the school until they become 21 years old. The numbers of students from grades 3, 4 and 5 has been falling in recent years as part of the schools' move to becoming a junior high school/ high school. Fifty-eight percent of students are Hispanic, 35% Black, 4% White 2% Asian/Pacific Islander and less than 1% Native American. Forty-two percent of the students are English language learners.

The main site is solely occupied by Public School 79, which is also a barrier-free building. Part of the building, for high school alternate assessment students, is divided into three academic houses, Engineering and Technology, Arts and Humanities and Public Services. Standardized and alternate assessments are used to gather information on the progress of students. The school's second site is co-located at the site of another Public School.

The school has established partnerships to provide students with a range of work placements and other partnerships to enrich the curriculum.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides clear leadership for the school; she is a 'visible' leader who conveys high expectations for student progress and social behavior.
- The school collects a wide range of standardized and informal data on all its students to give a full picture of their development and progress.
- The school evaluates students that are 18 years old and above on their readiness to enter the world of work.
- There are clear procedures to address unacceptable behavior and students are well supported in positive behavior programs.
- The exciting and imaginative curriculum extends experience and learning for students.
- Students and staff show mutual respect for each other.
- Students also show a high level of respect for one other.
- Staff work effectively in multi-professional teams to plan and deliver holistic intervention for each student.
- The school is creative in finding ways to establish and sustain communication with parents, so they can be effective partners in their children's learning.
- Their wide choice of work placements with outside organizations extends the curriculum and prepares students for their lives after leaving school.

What the school needs to improve

- Use data routinely to set goals for individual students which then lead into whole-school goals.
- Use data more effectively to plan differentiated learning which motivates and engages students at an appropriate level for their needs.
- Ensure that all students have access to a full curriculum.
- Ensure consistent practice by all members of the administration team in their monitoring and observations, in order to improve instruction and learning outcomes for students.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of instructional support staff in terms of learning outcomes, not just student behavior.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal provides strong leadership and delivers a strong message of “keep aiming higher” to students and for the whole school. Data is gathered to give a holistic picture of each student’s progress in academic, social, communication and readiness for work. This is not yet used consistently to set goals and inform lesson planning.

The students are well supported by a positive behavior program, through which incidents are managed with minimum disruption to school life alongside a proactive approach to work with students on behavior management.

There is creativity in the curriculum, which extends students’ learning experiences and raises their self-esteem. These include opera and drama performances; students across the school showed excitement and anticipation for the performances of Mascagni’s *Cavallera Rusticana*. Work programs give vocationally-bound young people the experience of work. They also prepare them for their lives as adults, contributing to their community. The balanced and holistic approach to developing students was well expressed by them, “Teachers remind us of what we need to do better at – that’s skills, plus attitude and being polite, showing respect and listen to directions.”

The curriculum at off-site locations is limited, as the school does not have access to the full range of specialist curriculum resources.

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 gathers appropriate data from standardized assessments taken by a small proportion of its students and, for the remainder, from the New York State Alternative Assessment Data Folio Project. Ongoing teacher assessments and portfolios of work are also used to give an accurate picture of each student’s academic, attendance, social, developmental and communication progress. Teachers keep portfolios of students’ work to supplement the test data and show how students work outside test conditions. Data is gathered to show the developing linguistic competence of bilingual students in English and Spanish.

The school monitors the progress of all students in great detail, including those over the age of 18 years. Assessments of this group include evaluations of their readiness for work and progress in independent travel training. Progress made by students in different subjects is compared to highlight variations and similarities in progress. It is also used by the administration to evaluate the effectiveness of different programs being provided. The emphasis, however, is more on the progress of individual students than on the analysis of groups. The school is less rigorous in comparing the performance of students in different

classes, ethnic groups and grades to ensure that progress is equal across the different groups in the school.

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.

There is evidence of collaborative sharing of data so that instruction closely matches students’ needs to advance learning. The cabinet reviews academic assessment data alongside that for attendance and behavior and communicates this information to relevant staff. The extended cabinet and assistant principals play a vital role in sharing this further through the two-weekly planning meetings, where each team uses the assessment information as the basis for their short-term planning. Assessment data is not used as effectively to inform longer-term plans.

Standardized and alternate assessment scores are used to track the progress of students in inclusive education programs and indicate where changes need to be made. Such changes may include when students have progressed sufficiently to move from district 75. Information is shared with parents and students through the report cards and individual education plan meetings. In these, Brigance data is used to make clear what students can do and what needs to be achieved next. Clear links are made to the goals in the students’ individual education plan to show how these will be achieved. While data is well used to identify the progress made by individual students, it is not used to set goals to increase the challenge for groups of students, and thus into whole-school targets.

Wherever possible the school includes students in goal-setting and review meetings, empowering them to take responsibility for their own learning. Multi-professional meetings include school and community-organization based staff, to enable parents and students to have a full picture of progress and next steps to be taken. The school is creative in the ways it sustains dialogue with parents, through workshops and meetings. Imaginative ways are used to engage students and parents in after-school activities, for example, dances for students with the ‘price’ of admission as ‘bring along a parent’. At these events workshops are arranged for parents before they join their children for the social part of the evening. Workshops include information about how to apply or extend learning at home and support available for parents.

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.

There is a clear structure for delivering the standard and alternate curriculum, which ensures that assessment requirements are met and allows teachers flexibility to address the diverse needs of the students. The curriculum content and assessment approaches are reviewed each year to take account of the range of student needs. Each year, students at the main site perform an opera and a Shakespeare play to their peers. These productions provide opportunities for the cast and backstage crew to demonstrate skills in the creative arts and give the other students (as audience members) a sense of ‘theater’

through engagement with a musical score, dialogue and live performance. In the off-site location, students do not have full access to specialist teaching resource areas; consequently there are limits on their opportunities to access and a wide curriculum including facilities for music, computers, science and physical education.

The effectiveness of spending on instructional support staff is monitored through analysis of student behavior. This is used to evaluate how well teaching support is used to promote positive and reduce disruptive behavior. Monitoring of the impact of instructional support staff on learning outcomes is carried out by some, not all, teachers. Staffing allocation is determined by the goals in students' individual education plans and the preferences of teachers, to ensure a match between student needs and teachers' strengths. Scheduling plans give opportunities for students to achieve the goals in their individual education plans through activities that motivate and interest them.

Teachers and para-professional staff plan in teams, meeting every two weeks with staff from other agencies to plan holistic programs for the students. Teachers who use assessment data well provide strong teaching which matches the needs of their students. They consider formal assessment outcomes alongside observation data, to give a full picture of each student and use this to align instruction with the needs of the students. Where instruction is less strong, teachers do not cater for the individual needs of students, levels of engagement are low and para-professionals are not well managed.

The principal emphasizes the need for students to be engaged and active in their learning. Students are responsible for making the decisions for which house they enter, which increases a sense of purpose for learning in that area. Strong teachers deliver active programs which engage students and give meaningful learning experiences. These include culinary arts programs, travel training, work experience in the community, performing arts and active academic classes. However, not all teachers are equally adept at providing instruction which motivates and engages students.

Students feel that they can share concerns with adults at the school and they will be addressed. This applies to students using speech, augmented systems, signing or symbols to communicate. Screened areas mean that students needing help with their personal care are treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity.

The school strives to improve attendance, but the delicate health of the most disabled students results in frequent hospital stays, which reduce overall attendance figures. This does not mean that the school is complacent about attendance; data on student attendance is used to highlight areas where actions are needed to overcome particular causes of poor attendance.

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 administration is careful to match the needs of students to teacher's strengths and makes good use of the knowledge gained in observations in allocating staff to particular classes and subjects. Professional development is linked to teachers' individual needs and also reflects the need for school-wide improvements. Not all teachers apply data in their planning and professional development is being used to address this.

The principal is respected by staff, parents and students. She makes it clear that the students are the focus of the school and models high expectations. The principal and assistant principals observe lessons, with intervention plans being put in place to support under performing teachers. There is inconsistency between practice at the main site and the off-site location, and some under-performance has been excused rather than challenged. This is being tackled by increasing the rigor of monitoring through observations. Where observations are linked to constructive feedback, teachers use this to improve their performance. Where observations are less focused and development opportunities are over-looked, under-performance is not addressed.

The teachers' handbook was written by recently hired staff, so makes no assumptions about prior knowledge, yet gives staff clear guidance on working within the school's protocols. Staff are clear about their roles both on a day-to-day basis and in emergency situations. Procedures are clear, and the school runs well. Staff have developed valuable links with a number of community-based organizations to enhance the curriculum. Through these, a range of meaningful work placements are offered to students, where they can apply their learning from classes, interact in a wider social environment and gain experience of the world of work.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has processes to gather the views of all staff as part of its monitoring. The school's Comprehensive Education Plan, which covers work at all locations, is reviewed by the administration, with the extended cabinet and leadership team, every three months. Teachers' views are sought through a survey in which they are asked to identify changes needed in the goals of particular students and the reasons for those changes.

The achievement of students against their goals from the Brigance scales is analyzed and reviewed to evaluate progress and effectiveness of interventions. Assessment of progress from other programs is also used to monitor their impact. This also includes numbers of students who have successfully completed travel training. Where individual student outcomes from the Brigance scales show insufficient progress, goals are reviewed, interventions and sometimes student groups changed.

All staff are involved in reviewing school plans, for example through the survey referred to earlier. Procedures are changed when the need arises. For example, following an incident concerning a missing student, the views of staff and administration informed major changes in procedures which increased student safety and led to increased instruction time. Ongoing review of data as well as evaluation of one-off events are all used to monitor actions being taken and inform changes necessary.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Dr Edmund Horan High School (PS 79)	∅	✓	+
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	