



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Dr. Sun Yat Sen School

Middle School 131

**100 Hester Street
New York
NY 10002**

Principal: Jane Lehrach

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Reviewer: Louise Kapner

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Dr. Sun Yat Sen School is located in Chinatown on the lower east side of Manhattan. There are 900 students from grades 6 through 8, of whom 1% are White, 5% are Black, 12% are Hispanic and 82% are Asian. The gender split is 57% male to 43% female. Thirty percent of the students are English language learners. Twenty five percent, which is significantly higher than similar and City schools, are recent immigrants mainly from China. Close to 17% are special education students receiving services in self-contained classes, collaborative team classes or through special education teacher support. A number of these students participate in alternate assessments. The school is in its second year of corrective action as the cohort of English language learners did not make adequate yearly progress in English language arts for the school year 2004-2005.

Attendance at 97% is significantly higher than similar and City schools. The school's Title 1 eligibility of 87% matches that of similar but is above City schools.

The school is located in a spacious and well maintained building and shares space with one other High School.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and her administrative team work collaboratively to create a school of high achievers.
- The school makes excellent use of data to drive instruction for all students, including English language learners and special education.
- Professional development is an integral component of the school's program.
- The use of technology supports instruction and student learning.
- High expectations for staff are part of the school culture.
- The school integrates Teachers' College strategies across the content areas.
- Students are actively engaged in learning and know what is expected of them.
- Teachers are supported by administration and other support personnel and they demonstrate a dedicated approach to working with students.
- Parents view the administration with high regard and feel informed as to the school program.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the instructional program for the higher achieving students, so that they maintain their level of performance.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The principal is highly effective and ably supported by three assistant principals. Each brings their own expertise to the administrative team as 'mini-leaders' supported by the principal. They work collaboratively to create a school that is welcoming and provides a positive learning experience for all students. Overall school performance on recently received standardized test results reflects the strong efforts of the school.

The school is using all available data to effectively monitor students' progress and to create instructional programs that meet individual student's needs. Specific programs have been designed to meet the needs of the English language learners and special education students. A 'Pledge of Peace' placard is visible on walls throughout the school and students and parents sign off on the pledge, which is part of the student planner given out at the beginning of the school year.

The positive tone of the school is shared by teachers, parents and students. Teachers feel their efforts to help students are supported well, students would recommend this school to their friend, and parents feel they and their children are respected. All members of the school community are valued and share the vision of creating and maintaining a school of high achievers.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

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

The school gathers and uses detailed data on the performance and progress of the school and each of its students. It has an accurate understanding of its performance in comparison with similar and City schools. Results on state examinations are analyzed for each student, grade and for particular categories of students of interest to this school. The data shows that special education students receiving teacher support services make the greatest gains, as compared to the rest of the school. Individual education plans provide teachers of special education students with clear information about their learning needs.

The school was identified during 2004-05 as in need of corrective action as English language learners did not make the required adequate yearly progress. Recent results show that the great majority of students make adequate progress. Further analysis of standardized tests and grades identified a small group of students with the highest skill levels, who were underperforming. The school does not fully monitor these students or develop school programs that are sufficiently challenging and motivating to enable them to

maintain their high level of achievement. For the English language learners, who make up a much higher proportion of the students, results from State tests are carefully monitored to determine any areas of strength or potential weaknesses.

Interim assessment data provides teachers with information on the instructional needs for their class and for individual students. A range of other assessments is used with high needs students to identify specific skills that require in-depth instruction during academic intervention and the extended day program. Interim progress reports, translated into Spanish and Chinese, are generated four times a year for parents. There is detailed information on all students and classes, which includes test data, school grades, academic interventions, and outreach to parents. This information is used by the assistant principals to review individual student's progress and to help guide discussions with teachers.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

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

The principal and her administrative team place great emphasis on providing for the instructional needs of all the students through a process of collaboration. Teachers access and use data to drive instruction. Results from interim assessments enable the teachers to look at the overall needs of their class as well as each student. The teachers make extensive use of their notes from conferences with students to monitor progress and provide support for individuals.

The students have access to the web site to review their own results and identify where they may need additional support. Clear rubrics provide them with guidelines for assignments and as one student said, "You can pretty much grade yourself before you hand it in." The graded on-line assignments provide the teachers with further information to help them differentiate instruction.

The coaches, lead teachers, administrators and key instructional leaders regularly evaluate students' work and teachers' plans for evidence of good instruction and student performance. The coaches and lead teachers use this information to work with teachers and support them in creating classroom instruction that meets students' needs. Common meeting times are scheduled weekly for grade conferences and monthly for departments. Administrators use this time to further review students' accomplishments and discuss ways in which to enhance the instructional programs and set goals for continued improvement.

Academic intervention services are provided during the week for small groups of identified students. Instructional materials and specialized remedial programs are used. The teachers regularly assess the students' needs to target instruction at the specific skills that the students' need.

The school sets high expectations for all its students. The parents appreciate the information they receive about the school program at parent association meetings, parent orientations and during parent-teacher conferences. They know what is expected of their children and they are asked to be part of their education by reviewing and signing homework.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

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

The school’s instructional program aligns well with the needs of the students. Careful consideration is given to the curriculum and the scheduling of classes to support all students. Collaborative team teaching and a full time in-class support program for special education students, maximize effective instructional programming for these students.

The Teachers’ College reading and writing process is an integral part of every classroom. Each has a library with books leveled by difficulty. These support the concept of students reading ‘just right’ books. The school’s process for teaching writing is evident across different subjects and is incorporated into classes for English language learners. Analysis of the statutory tests showed a higher proficiency for English language learners in reading and writing than listening and speaking. To help improve their listening and speaking skills, the school introduced specific strategies such as ‘turn and talk’ and ‘partner share’ as part of the English as a second language instructional program. The school’s mathematics program is inquiry based and challenges students in computation and literacy. This approach is especially helpful to English language learners.

As part of the “iTeach iLearn” initiative the school is phasing in the use of electronic whiteboards in the classrooms. This tool engages students and offers teachers vast resources to support instruction. The students make good use of laptop computers to take notes and organize their work. The introduction of a foreign language for 7th and 8th grade students and an after school Math A class for 8th grade, gives students access to accelerated coursework with higher levels of demand.

The extended day program provides additional help to those students who may be struggling with some aspects of their work. Teachers work with their own students in small groups to match instruction to their needs.

Levels of attendance are high. Absences are monitored daily by the parent coordinator and calls are made promptly to the home of any absentees.

The budget is used well to maximize opportunities for the students. The school provides appropriate materials for learning and has a vast resource center of books and manipulatives for teachers to use in their classrooms. Teachers are highly skilled, provide optimum learning opportunities and look at the whole child to provide the best environment. The students know that the teachers care about them and as one said ‘they want us to learn.’

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 school has a high level of professionalism and evidence of good teaching. New teachers are selected through a rigorous screening process and held to a high standard. They are supported by the administrators, the coaches and other staff and provided with resources to address the needs of their students. Lead teacher and coach positions in

mathematics, English language arts and science are the source for sharing of best practices. Teachers feel they can go to anyone for help and or advice.

Professional development is an essential backbone of the school's program and encourages teachers to be learners. Opportunities are offered to teachers across the curriculum. They conference with coaches and attend professional development meetings held at the regional office and in the school, and have opportunities for intervisitations. Through the "Japanese" model of improving instruction, teachers from one content area jointly plan a lesson, observe it being taught with a close regard for the students' learning, and then jointly debrief and discuss observations.

The principal sets very high standards and she and her assistant principals maintain a high profile. They informally visit classes and use formal observations to provide written feedback to teachers. One parent said that the principal took a personal interest in what is going on in the classroom and "sat in on class where there was a disruptive student." This well-respected principal is involved in every aspect of a well-organized school.

Effective use is made of the support services and team meetings are held on a regular basis to address students' particular needs. Pupil intervention plans help guide the discussion and allow for effective follow up. Collaborations with community agencies provide educational opportunities that are built into the school's program and after school services. Students participate in enrichment activities, receive academic support, and enjoy the recreational activities.

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 school constantly looks at itself as a community of learners, while analyzing each of its components. The Comprehensive Educational Plan, a collaborative effort of administrators, teachers and parents, sets a framework for the school's program. Review of results from standardized tests, school generated data, and on-going meetings provide continuous information that is used to revisit and revise the goals of the school as appropriate. The instructional program is monitored for best practices and evidence of student learning. Standardized assessments and student-generated work are under constant review. Scheduling of classes and assignment of teachers are planned to maximize the skills of the teachers while providing appropriate educational opportunities for students.

The principal and her administrative team are already planning for next year. A recent faculty conference was devoted to this and involved teachers in the decision-making process. A magazine article, "How to Build a Student for the 21st Century", was used to help drive the discussion. The staff is eager to be part of, and the administrators welcome them into, the process.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Dr. Sun Yat Sen School: Middle School 131	∅	✓	+
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