



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Public School 138 M
144 East 128th Street
New York
NY 10035**

Principal: Jacqueline Keane

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Reviewer: Linda Murgatroyd

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 138M is a special education cluster school which services 359 special education students from kindergarten to grade 8, across seven different sites. The off-sites are located in neighborhoods that span the borough and include a wide diversity of communities and cultures.

Students have a wide range of special educational needs, including students functioning in the moderate to profound range of developmental disabilities, often with associated physical and sensory disabilities, and those with autism, severe emotional disabilities and cochlear implants. They receive a continuum of medical and therapeutic related services as specifically recommended in individualized education plans.

There are forty self-contained classes and seven inclusion classes, in cooperation with the community schools which share the sites. Students in seven classes follow the standardized assessment curriculum while students with more complex learning needs in the other forty classes follow an alternate assessment curriculum.

Hispanic students comprise 49% of the total enrolment, Black students 37%, with approximately even proportions of White and Asian students making up the remaining 14%. Additionally, 16.5% of the students are English language learners, with Spanish as the dominant home language. There are significantly more boys than girls, particularly in the emotionally disturbed classes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and her assistant principals provide highly effective, insightful leadership.
- Knowledgeable and highly motivated staff teams collaborate well to raise student achievement.
- Staff across the various disciplines know students very well, and use a good range of data to differentiate learning in detail.
- The positive relationships throughout the school are based on a high level of trust, which empowers staff to seek out innovative practice to improve learning.
- There is a strong and very successful focus on students' communication skills, supported by very good use of technology and augmented communication aids.
- Positive collaboration with host schools facilitates the inclusion of a growing number of students.
- Students are absorbed in activities, and obviously enjoy school.
- There is an extensive network of support for students and their families, highly appreciated by parents and caregivers.
- High expectations are helping to increase the proportion of students included in mainstream classes or following the standardized curriculum.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the analysis of data to identify patterns of achievement and progress across ethnic groups and by gender.
- Continue to work with parents and caregivers to involve more of them in discussions about their children's academic progress and how they can help them at home.
- For those students capable of understanding, provide more information about their goals, and increase feedback to them on how to improve their work and accelerate their progress.
- Increase opportunities for staff to share practice with others working with similar populations on different sites.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The principal provides outstanding leadership, supported by a highly able team of assistant principals. They effectively share their vision of empowerment for all students through enhanced communication, with staff, students and parents. They also empower staff, who respond in an innovative way to the needs of their students, always with the aim of raising achievement no matter what the starting point. Lessons are carefully tailored not only to meet academic and personal goals, but also to make learning as fun an experience as possible. Staff work collaboratively to share good practice, and know their students extremely well. This knowledge is firmly based on the good range of data about each student. This guides instruction, resulting in an increasing proportion of students being included into general education classes and/or taking standardized tests. Parents are happy with the school and the support, care and education it provides for their children.

The organization of the school on seven sites presents management difficulties, although the administration work very hard to minimize their impact. Despite its success, no-one at the school is complacent, and there is a constant drive for further improvement, based on already high and rising expectations. The areas for improvement identified in this report are intended to extend further the good practice which exists in the school.

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.

Data is very effectively used across the school to meet the needs of students. At an individual level, the school uses an extensive range of assessments and tests to provide teachers with a full picture of each student's progress against which to plan for further achievement. Teachers keep detailed portfolios containing data relevant to the needs of each student. These include information from the Brigance inventory, used well to measure the very small steps of progress made by students with complex needs. They also include observational material, supplemented by photographs to demonstrate competence at particular skills. For students following the standardized assessment curriculum, practice test scores and teacher-devised assessments are used effectively to show teachers what has been learned and what needs to be covered again or differently. In addition, teachers and therapists maintain their own records, again according to the particular needs of each student. Goals on individual education plans are assessed regularly, and findings from this exercise lead to revisions of programs. These, coupled with the data from portfolios, are used in daily planning for the further development of skills, providing a cohesive overall program for each student.

Therapists and teachers work very effectively together, both in compiling the data for each student and in planning and realigning programs and goals in response to changing information. This results in staff having a very detailed knowledge of each student, and

thus to the range of students' needs being met effectively. There are clear systems to identify the difference between students at an early stage of English language learning and those with a more complex language difficulty, although this is a difficult area for non-verbal students. Using this and other data, bilingual classes have been established for verbal and non-verbal students, to support language acquisition or fluency for both groups.

The school also analyzes a good variety of additional data to evaluate the effectiveness of its work. These include regularly surveying parents on their satisfaction with the school and their children's progress, as well as logging parental involvement and concerns. Professional development records are kept, allowing the cabinet members to maintain a view of staff areas of interest and expertise. Logs of social services involvement with families, and issues of concern regarding students' safety and well-being are maintained in accordance with requirements.

The principal and her cabinet carefully track the progress and achievement of the various groups of students in the school, and use the information well to identify where improvements might be made. For example, analysis of the test results from the first students to follow the standardized curriculum led to a realization of the possibility that more students could achieve in line with their non-disabled peers. Because of this, expectations across the school have risen. Careful analysis of the relative progress of students with different types of need is carried out, including comparisons with other schools for students on standardized assessment, as well as the achievement of students by class, cohort, and age. Action is taken where patterns are noted. There is some comparison with the results of similar schools, although this is limited by the difficulty of determining close matches because of the wide range of needs serviced. Although staff are confident that they have a clear picture of the progress of each individual student regardless of ethnicity, at present the school does not compare the overall performance of ethnic groups in the various populations.

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.

Teachers, therapists and support staff work collaboratively to raise student achievement across the population groups. They use students' individualized education plans to set medium and short-term goals for students, which in some classes are displayed on bulletin boards so that students can easily be reminded what they are working towards. This is not yet consistent practice for all classes where students are capable of understanding their goals, particularly those on standardized assessment. Although some of these students know what their short-term goals are, not all teachers give clear enough feedback on assignments for them to be as fully involved in their learning as they could be.

There is very effective use of technology and augmented communication, and symbols for structuring the school day support autistic students very well in managing transition between activities. A strong total communication approach maximizes dignity and enables students to communicate in ways appropriate for their needs. Interim goals are constantly updated using the information from ongoing assessments, so that instruction is closely focused on the small steps that students need to make to develop their skills and understanding.

Goals are effectively translated into classroom practice, and school leaders are constantly seeking ways to develop this. Data is used well to identify those students who can benefit from particular programs, for example from inclusion or from standardized assessment, and the information is fed into review of individualized education plans. Care is taken that not only the most cognitively advanced students are included, but any student who can benefit from a less restrictive environment is given appropriate opportunities. Cooperation with host community schools is crucial in this, and the partnership work very effectively. For example, on one particularly successful off-site a classroom teacher from the general education school requested that a student be identified for inclusion in his class, as he was enthusiastic about the program.

In this school for students with a range of needs, there is suitable focus on the particular needs of all groups. For example, teachers of students following the standardized curriculum are well supported by coaches to discuss students' performance data. The pupil personnel and academic intervention services teams on all sites work closely with their colleagues to support practice and ensure that needs are met. A small number of staff work across a number of sites, helping to provide continuity of approach.

The school provides an extensive network of support for children and their families, including practical support such as accompanying parents to medical appointments. Parents are delighted with the support they receive from the school. Staff work hard to help parents to understand the continuum of services their children receive, including providing workshops and facilitating observations of their children in the school setting. They also work closely with parents on issues such as transfer to more appropriate programs or when changing sites to attend middle or high school. The parent coordinator and the chair of the parent teacher association support this communication with support groups for parents and well-attended social events. Although school staff encourage parents to collaborate in setting their children's goals, and become involved in the academic aspects of their children's education so as to better support them at home, some parents remain hard to reach in this way.

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 successfully aligns its curriculum and instructional programs to meet the wide range of complex needs. It draws imaginatively on additional programs to support learning, such as therapeutic listening to help students to develop concentration and sensory processing, and a structured (and fun!) program modified to teach handwriting to autistic students. The instruction method used with autistic students effectively develops their communication skills and independence. A good mix of symbols, signs, text and electronic aids enable students to express themselves. A well-planned yoga program has been introduced to augment the emotional and physical well-being of students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Teachers for students following the standardized curriculum ensure that they maintain the essential elements while adapting instruction to meet their students' needs.

The principal and her cabinet scrutinize assessments for different populations across the sites to maintain a picture of how well students perform in each class. This, with discussion in various groups and forums, ensures that teachers are held accountable. Data is very effectively used to differentiate learning for each student, in all the different

populations and across sites. All staff have an acute awareness of the needs and progress of their students, and work together effectively in classroom teams to plan appropriate next steps in learning for each student. The use of technology to support differentiation is very effective.

Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are driven by the needs of students. School staff are very creative in the use of funds, for example collaborating with another special education school in manufacturing and refurbishing low-cost equipment. The school is well resourced across the classrooms and the sites. School leaders work hard to establish and maintain good cooperation with host schools for access to facilities, but this is not equally effective on all off-sites. Scheduling is complex across the sites, but skillfully achieves the allocation of staff from all disciplines to where they are most needed. However, inevitably, administrators lose valuable time in traveling between sites. Teachers and therapists are encouraged to build on their strengths to seek out and develop programs which will bring benefits to students, including the development of independence, dignity and enjoyment. Students with a range of disabilities take obvious pleasure in the activities they experience in lessons, and have positive attitudes to learning.

Attendance is negatively affected by hospital appointments and extremes of weather, especially for fragile and non-ambulant students. Procedures for tracking attendance are clear, and the school follows up every absence rigorously. Students have obvious confidence in staff and verbal students say that they have adults to whom they can go for help.

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 rigorous process to select staff based on the needs of students and in line with school priorities. For example, one assistant principal was hired specifically for his expertise in standardized assessment. Staff and students are involved in the process, with students' views sought and acted upon following mini-lessons by candidates. The principal has built a dedicated and skilled team of teachers and therapists who work to their strengths in promoting students' life skills alongside raising academic achievement in a stimulating way. There have been examples of staff moving across teams to ensure that good practice is shared.

Professional development has a high profile, provided externally and in-house, as well as by District 75. Staff are empowered by school leaders to follow their interests and develop their areas of expertise, as well as working within identified school priorities. Staff are self-evaluative and constantly seek to improve their practice. Some teachers and therapists have paid for their own external courses, for example Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-Handicapped Children training, such is their commitment to their students' achievement. Wherever possible, the principal finds ways to reimburse staff for these efforts. There is productive sharing of expertise and ideas in teams across each site, often based on data, but less opportunity for staff working with similar populations across different sites to collaborate and share practice.

Members of the instructional team carry out focused walkthroughs and make frequent informal visits to classrooms. Formal observations are also undertaken as required,

although with such a large staff distributed across the sites, this is a challenge in terms of time. There are some inter-site visitations by staff members, but they would welcome more opportunities to learn from colleagues working with students with similar needs. The instructional team have a very clear view of staff strengths and areas for development, and measure the impact of professional development by scrutiny of data and student work, as well as classroom observation. They are able to demonstrate, through the data, that students make good progress as a result of the skilled practice.

The principal has a very positive stance on school improvement. She has a clear vision which she effectively communicates, but one of her strengths is the way she encourages staff to be innovative and try out ideas and programs. As a result, staff feel empowered and take ownership of their instructional practices, always to the benefit of the students. The school is an exciting place for students and staff alike. The high level of student engagement which results from the very structured lessons and clear expectations, as well as the supportive culture, means that the school runs smoothly across the sites. Partnerships with outside agencies to enhance student learning are strong, especially with social services agencies.

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 is successful in raising the achievement of its students, but staff are not at all complacent, and are constantly seeking new ways to support students. Expectations are rising as more students achieve success in external tests or in inclusion programs. The school's work is characterized by innovation, evaluation and realignment, at individual, group and whole-school level. The principal has established a culture of trust that makes it possible to try new ideas and adapt existing ones, to better meet the needs of students.

There is a rigorous process for establishing the goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan. Staff are surveyed and data examined. This process looks at individual student goals, aggregates these into goals for the various groups within the school and these then become realistic but challenging whole-school targets. In this way, goals set are firmly based on the picture of student achievement. These goals are then aligned with the mission statement, to ensure that the school's primary aims are kept in focus. The goals in this plan are in turn reflected in the principal's performance review. Goals are clear and measurable, with persons responsible identified and timescales by when they will be achieved.

Whole-school goals are shared, in summary, with all staff, both in written form and articulated at cabinet, site and faculty meetings. Although not all staff are fully aware of whole-school goals, they are given very good support in the specific programs and initiatives designed to help the school meet its goals. As a result, they understand very clearly how they play a part in these to make a difference to students' achievements. These initiatives are evaluated thoroughly, and changes made if necessary, in an ongoing process of monitoring and revising typical of the work with individuals and groups of students, as well as the whole-school level. The process is consistent across sites.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 138M (PS 138)	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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