



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Crossroads School

**Middle School 246
243 West 109 Street
New York
NY 10025**

Principal: Rodney Murphy

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Reviewer: Ken Bryan

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Crossroads School is a small middle school serving grades 6 through 8. The student population is made up of 58.4% Hispanic, 34.8% Black, 4.1% white and 2.7% Asian. The proportion of special education students is 6.6% which is smaller than in similar and City schools. At 12.7%, the proportion of English language learners is about the same. The school receives Title I funding. The level of student attendance at 91% is falling and is below Citywide and similar-school averages.

The school is located at the top of an old building housing two other schools. It has a combined faculty of 25 to serve just 212 students. Three principals have led the school in the past three years and the present faculty is mostly new. The current principal was appointed in August 2006.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and new team are slowly bringing about change.
- Some teachers effectively use individual student data to provide regularly small step updated goals for development.
- Students in greatest need of improvement are identified quickly and effective interventions are planned.
- Teachers are developing effective and creative adaptations to the mandated curriculum to meet the needs of all learners.
- The faculty is devising professional development programs to react to the instructional needs of each teacher and to learning outcomes.
- All faculty and administration staff, in collaboration with the principal, have worked hard within this transitional period to establish some stability and continuity.

What the school needs to improve

- In consultation with all members of the school community, devise the Comprehensive Education Plan to support the school's vision.
- Develop a coherent behavior policy, and ensure it is consistently and diligently applied.
- Monitor and review rigorously the effectiveness of instructional programs and the quality of classroom practice to ensure greater consistency.
- Set challenging goals and plans for school improvement.
- Use available data more effectively to track individual student achievement over time and to compare the performance of different groups.
- Develop professional development to enhance the use of technology and to improve behavior management strategies.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school

Many challenges lie ahead for Crossroads School. Following an unsettling few years, the new principal and his new, relatively inexperienced staff have begun to stabilize and consolidate this transitional phase. The faculty gels well as a unit, but with some variation in terms of expertise and expectation. The large majority of the teachers and the school's cabinet exhibit a positive and professional approach to school improvement. This has been achieved despite being housed in a challenging learning environment.

The school has not yet set in place a collaborative process for formulating its interim and long-term goals or for establishing the culture and shared vision for the school. Professional development does not fully support classroom practice and there is no consistent and vigilantly applied behavior code. In addition, the school does not actively engage parents by involving them in the life of the school. Declining levels of achievement in English language arts in grades 7 and 8, being partly attributable to the turbulence, are not yet appropriately dealt with by rigorous monitoring and decisive leadership.

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.

Although it is working towards developing systems to track and compare performance at classroom, grade and school level, the school makes limited use of the available City, State and school data. Not all staff are yet trained in the use of data at grade, subject and whole-school levels to robustly analyze trends in performance over time, in order to set challenging goals by class. However, as a consequence of the school's small size, some teachers effectively use individual student data to gain a secure understanding of each student's performance. Many are actively studying Grow report data to identify at-risk students and to use this information to set small-step learning goals. There is inconsistency in the way the staff use the available data.

There is a suitable emphasis upon classroom and student level data, but the school does not make appropriate use of this data within grades and it does not effectively track progress over time. Insufficient emphasis is placed on the sub-group achievement, particularly the achievement of special education students and English language learners within general education classes, as well as ethnic groups. The decline in grade-level performance has not been analyzed in sufficient detail because the tracking of individual students' progress over time is not yet in place.

As the school is relatively new, data is not used to compare the school's performance over time or with similar schools. Similarly, comparisons of different groups by class and grade are not yet in place.

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.

Due to recent turbulence in the school’s leadership, data-driven goals, to raise capacity and to challenge inconsistency, are at an early stage of development. The Comprehensive Education Plan, with its goals and priorities for school improvement, has been inherited from the previous administration and faculty and does not drive forward improvement sufficiently well. While the staff work well with individual students to set small-step goals and make minor but well-informed adjustments to their programs, they have not had the time or the in-depth skills to analyze long-term trends at grade and school level. The principal is trying hard to tackle these issues. He has worked with the new administration and faculty to create procedures for setting goals at class and grade level and developing plans for improvements to stem the decline in levels of attendance, achievement and the attitudes of students. Until recently, whole-school, collaborative, consensual approaches to goal-setting, using all available data, have not been part of the school’s practice. As yet there is too little faculty involvement in the school leadership team to assist this collaborative process.

The interaction between most of the staff and students is good and the teachers have been able to identify those students most in need of support. Intervention programs have been initiated to focus on students close to the next level, following an analysis of their test scores, although the effectiveness of these has not yet been seen in test results.

The setting of high expectations across the school is inconsistent. The school does not actively engage the parents and so their involvement in the life of the school and their children’s progress is limited. Parents are given their children’s report card and are kept informed of their performance levels. Some teachers keep in regular contact with parents to strengthen the link between home and individual classes. However, this practice is too inconsistent and depends too much on which class their children are in as to the amount of information they receive. The faculty does not sufficiently seek regular contacts with parents and caregivers to communicate information, to share expectations and to foster trust and respect, especially needed at this time when the school is in transition.

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.

The school closely follows the mandated curriculum based upon the Balanced Literacy and Impact Mathematics programs. These are suitably supplemented by accelerated literacy learning and Teaching Matters, which are supported well by consultants. Regional instructional specialists give good support and the teachers are beginning to develop their own assessments and interim measures for tracking student progress and using the information to align the curriculum. Some, but not yet all, teachers are pro-active in providing individual targets for improvement and have put together rubrics that are clear and challenging. The school has initiated good systems for the identification of at risk students and the interventions are effective.

The instructional programs do not consistently engage the students. The standards of classroom practice are variable and the principal and the assistant principal realize that the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and achieving more consistency is a key task.

Budgeting and staffing decisions do not yet take enough account of data analyses and the school's goals. The school has yet to fully define its plans and goals and is therefore poorly placed to determine need. There is limited faculty participation in the school leadership team. The school has worked hard to establish its daily schedule and some flexibility in the use of its single or double periods has been built in.

The school has started to work with students to evaluate work in individual portfolios. This and the introduction of rubrics and small-step goals are helping students to have a clearer overview of their learning. Relationships and behavior are improving. Some staff 'adopt' vulnerable students to provide support and suitable guidance for their personal development. As yet, there is no formal policy to help guide and nurture consistently good behavior from all students.

The overall level of student attendance is falling and is currently at 91%. The school's systems for following up absence are managed by the parent co-coordinator and the guidance counselor. These systems are adequate but inconsistently applied. The school does not follow up all absences with enough rigor. The support of the parents is not currently actively sought to ensure that these procedures are effective.

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 undeveloped.

The school has an almost entirely new faculty, employed at the beginning of the fall semester 2006. The principal is still seeking to employ a speech specialist and a collaborative team teacher. Teachers were selected according to their educational background and subject expertise, although there was some haste to fill some positions.

Working with a young and largely inexperienced faculty, the principal has already provided a number of targeted professional development opportunities, led by instructional needs rather than by student data. The school sometimes uses external providers to supply training, and teachers who attend share the information learned with the rest of the staff. Additional in-school sessions focus on improving the quality of classroom practice through the weekly grade and faculty meetings. These meetings also give good opportunities for staff to discuss openly how well their instruction is helping students to make progress and to use the outcomes of discussions to plan for improvement.

Effective professional development opportunities, to address the needs of all staff in relation to behavior management and in the deployment and use of the school's technology, have yet to be arranged. The school does not have a consistent approach to behavior within classrooms and hallways. After investing heavily in recent years and having been a magnet school for communication, the use of technology by teachers and students has stagnated.

While the principal frequently visits classrooms, the rationale for this is not always clear. However, there is a commitment for change. There is a developing culture that embraces

collaboration and inter-visitation to improve classroom practice and data analysis. The school still has far to go, but the principal is gaining respect and with stability and considerable mentoring support, he has the capacity to effect change. Unfortunately, in its current embryonic state, and due to constraints by the building, the school does not run smoothly. It is a noisy and sometimes distracting learning environment, especially in the hallways, the gymnasium and in the stairwells.

The school is affiliated with a number of outside organizations which are helping it to enrich curriculum programs and improve instruction through grants and consultant support.

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.

The school is becoming increasingly adept at planning interventions and short-term interim goals. Due to its small size, the teachers know students' academic and personal needs and use a variety of diagnostic, formative assessments in most classes to evaluate the quality of their instruction. As a result, the use of task-specific rubrics is a developing feature, although the use of resultant effective differentiation is inconsistent. The principal does not monitor classrooms with enough focus to tackle effectively these inconsistencies in planning and delivery. The use of grade-level and school comparisons is limited and the school's capacity to analyze data and adjust programs and instruction accordingly has yet to be developed. Interim measures are used in mathematics and English language arts, but these address classroom-level issues rather than inform whole-school trends.

The school is beginning to put together a structure for evaluating its practice and identifying goals to move it forward. The school has not yet reached full capacity to analyze grade-level scores, trends over time and other comparative data, for example, by sub-group and similar school performance to inform objectively measurable goals. However, there is a renewed determination and commitment to succeed which permeates staff drive to bring about change. There has been too little time for this change to be effected.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Crossroads School (246)	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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		