



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Manhattan New School

Public School 290

**311 East 82 Street
New York
NY 10028**

Principal: Sharon Hill

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Reviewer: Charles Lupton

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Manhattan New School is a large kindergarten through 5th grade elementary school serving 671 students. Each grade has a Collaborative team teaching class with other classes taught in heterogeneous groups. Students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds with the greatest proportion (74%) from White families. There are 12% Hispanic, 10% Asian and 3% Black. The main language is English. There are 30 English language learners (4.5%) and 100 (15%) special education students. The school attendance rate is slightly higher than similar and City schools at 95.1%. Title 1 eligibility, at 8.4% is significantly below the City average of 71.9%.

Public School 290 is oversubscribed causing a lack of teaching and play space. Consequently, many rooms have dual use, clubs have to run at lunchtimes and the road is used as a playground.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and all staff are highly dedicated and continuously drive to develop the school.
- Very good differentiation is apparent in every class.
- All members of staff work collaboratively as a cooperative team.
- Formative assessment data is used comprehensively, resulting in instruction that is very well tailored to the needs of individual students.
- High quality, continuous professional development, including active study groups, is enjoyed by all members of staff.
- The school is clean and there are quality displays of student work throughout the building reflecting many curriculum areas.
- An integrated curriculum is used very well to support learning, including the use of technology in the classrooms.
- There is a wide range of good enrichment activities including lunchtime clubs, extended school classes that include cluster subjects and after school clubs.
- English language learners and special education students are well catered for and are moved into general education as early as possible.
- Parents actively support the principal and the school and are very appreciative of the quality of care, instruction, and curriculum events that the school offers their children.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop good formative assessment recording procedures within and between grades to streamline data collection.
- Use continuing professional development to build useful data analysis systems to refine the school's ability to compare groups of students and to monitor trends in performance over time.
- When planning for future school development, include interim and diagnostic goals to monitor success objectively.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

The whole school has a very strong collaborative approach and constantly strives to improve itself for the benefit of the students. Despite its size, the school has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere where everyone is valued. The Parents and students hold the school in very high regard. Students are safe and know they have adults to help them if required.

Organizationally, the school is very strong with well defined and understood procedures. Reflective instruction and teamwork are very positive features of the school and are fundamental to the school's success. Staff know their students extremely well and have frequent conferences with them to actively support learning. Scheduled meetings with administration and coaches are used very effectively to inform future direction and to help guide professional development of staff. Joint prep grade meetings are used constructively to discuss student learning and to plan future instruction. Differentiation is used very effectively throughout the school and professional development is highly developed.

Available data, including feedback from parents, formative assessments, observations, walkthroughs and faculty meetings is used effectively to improve the school. However, there is scope for the school to utilize data more effectively to enhance understanding of different student groups and to set interim action planning goals.

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.

Through the excellent use of formative assessment data, the school has a very clear and objective understanding of the performance of each student and the progress they are making. Teachers and administration use this and other more formal data to monitor the performance and progress of each class and to compare grades. Detailed written reports are prepared for each student and are used to inform collaborative discussion about individual students as they are promoted to the next grade.

The processes in place to monitor progress for English language learners and special education are well developed. Individual education plans are used effectively to provide for the needs of special education students who are monitored and moved out of special education as soon as they are able. English language learners are taught by well deployed specialist teachers in Collaborative team teaching classes in each grade. The aim is for the students to become advanced learners and to move into mainstream quickly and smoothly. This is achieved well.

Good, systematic, formative assessment data, and other empirical data is used very effectively to inform planning, class groupings and additional after-school instruction. Although the school does compare performance well, comparative analysis of performance within and across grades is not as effective as it could be as there are inconsistencies in how the data is recorded between classes. The school is aware of this and is currently planning to develop this.

Using data, the school has identified other student categories including 'higher achievers' and 'at risk' students for particular attention and effectively supports these groups. Data is also used to measure and compare the performance of this school with others and over time. However, data is not yet systematically used to identify trends in performance for some groups of students over time. This has already been identified by the school as a developmental issue.

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 very strong school culture of collaborative, mutually supportive teamwork is highly effective. The school constantly and successfully strives to improve the performance of every student and through very detailed knowledge of each individual, sets demanding goals for future attainment. For example, using data, the school identified that a significant proportion of students were performing at high level 3. This led to targeted intervention and test prep programs to support these students.

The Comprehensive Education Plan utilizes data to set instructional goals, for example greater differentiation, to improve individual performance. The plan also identifies improvement goals for curriculum subjects and groups of identified students. School data is used very effectively to identify students, including the more able, for the test-prep program.

Parents have very high expectations for their children and for the school. The school is pro-active in keeping parents informed about student progress and school development, setting high, achievable future targets. The parents are very appreciative of this and hold the principal and the school in exceptionally high regard. Through surveys and discussion, parental opinion is actively sought and outcomes are fed into future planning. For example, parents requested more information about cluster classes which resulted in more information being placed on the good school website as well as professional development for teachers in creating their space on the website itself.

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.

Alignment of the curriculum is well developed. Each subject has rubrics exemplifying standards for each level and teachers use these very effectively to monitor student progress in detail. Conformity of outcome between classes and grades is assured through

frequent collaborative activity such as moderation of student work, open professional dialogue, coach and administration input. Teachers are respected as professionals and, within the curriculum structure, are given flexibility to plan their own instruction. High expectations are conveyed to each student through conferencing during which work is discussed. This formative assessment informs current understanding and informs future instruction either for the whole class, groups or individuals. When a student is not progressing as expected, intervention strategies are developed to support future learning.

The principal has very high expectations for instruction and the teachers are held directly accountable for the instruction in their class which is of a consistently high standard throughout the school. Universally, classes contain a carpet area for whole class instruction, circular tables for group activity, good displays of student work, and rubrics to support student learning. Differentiation, with three or four leveled activities is used very effectively to address individual student needs. Good use is made of talking partners and the workshop model to actively engage students in their learning.

High quality instruction is supported through scheduling decisions such as joint prep periods for grade teachers including Collaborative team teaching. Budgeting decisions are informed by need. For example, grade teachers are released for collaborative curriculum planning meetings and the school employs additional support staff. During the extended day, cluster teachers are scheduled to teach their specialist subjects rather than English language arts or mathematics.

The school has given considerable thought to expanding extension opportunities within the curriculum, at lunch time and after school. This is very popular with each stakeholder. Frequent off-site visits are used to inspire student instruction. The quality of art work found in the school is high and curriculum integration is a strong feature of the school. For example, in one class, a set of laptops (one of ten) was being used to research African animals in readiness for a dance session.

The school has well-developed structures for supporting students' social and personal development with excellent levels of individual care. Each student is known very well and students like and trust all members of staff, knowing they can find comprehensive help and support. Robust procedures ensure student attendance is above average.

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.

New staff are selected very carefully through prior knowledge or rigorous interview. The principal makes her expectations explicit and appointments are based on the applicant's knowledge of the Manhattan New School, their capacity to teach very well, commitment to continuous professional development, collaborative working, pedagogical knowledge, and a stated belief that it is a 'privilege to work with children'. This process has proved very effective in building a team of highly reflective practitioners who work together extremely well.

The approachable, highly respected and trusted administration team sets very high standards and is successful in ensuring school wide conformity. Ideas for improvement are always listened to and incorporated if worthwhile. The principal and assistant principal frequently observe lessons together and provide constructive, positive feedback to staff

and clear, realistic developmental points. Individual professional development aligns to these points through input from the coaches and through collaborative support and peer to peer observation and discussion.

Professional development is seen as key in the school's future success. During a cabinet meeting, professional development opportunities were identified as an integral part of the planning process. Professional development is developed very well through in-house provision and by utilizing outside agencies. Whole school priorities for professional development are identified through lesson observations, surveys and detailed discussion with all interested parties. Professional development is very effectively administered utilizing expertise from within the school or from outside agencies and its impact is monitored carefully. If particular plans are not effective, the school reconsiders its approach effectively. The school is a focal point for professional development and frequently welcomes visitors from the City and further a field.

The school runs very smoothly indeed with well established routines and good communication. Support services are used very well with many continuously on site. The school enjoys excellent partnerships with a wide range of outside bodies, for example, Manhattan School of Music, National Dance Institute, and local universities.

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 well developed.

The school has comprehensive structures that are fully in place to evaluate each student's progress and achievement throughout the year. On a daily basis, teachers assess students and their work and develop strategies to improve individual instruction. Good intervention strategies are implemented when required to support both student and teacher development.

Excellence in student instruction and progress drives all school planning and is clearly built into the Comprehensive Education Plan. The plan is a working document because it is drawn up by all interested parties and is specifically communicated to all staff at a training day. It contains data analysis and developmental points for instruction which are carefully implemented and monitored during the year in a variety of ways including lesson observation. However, plans do not contain clear interim measures of success. The school has identified this as an issue to address.

If elements of school development planning are not working as effectively as they should, the school flexibly alters its plans to reflect necessary changes. The school appraises its plans well and builds future goals based upon this analysis.

Despite being a successful school, there is no complacency and staff are constantly seeking to raise achievement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Manhattan New School, PS 290	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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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