



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Patria Mirabal Middle School

Middle School 324

**21 Jumel Place
Brooklyn
NY 10032**

Principal: Janet Heller

Dates of review: May 9 - 10, 2007

Reviewer: Nick Butt

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Patria Mirabal Middle School has an enrollment of 427 students, covering grades 6 through 8. The population comprises 85% Hispanic students, 13% Black students and 2% other ethnic groups. There are 20% special education students. Thirty percent of students are English language learners. The main language spoken is Spanish. The school receives Title 1 funding for 93% of its students, much higher than for other similar and City schools. Student attendance, at 93%, has been consistently above the average for similar and City schools.

The school was established in 2004 and became an empowerment school in 2006. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a highly respected leader whose collaborative approach gives staff the freedom to try new ideas and constantly review their practice.
- There is a strong collegial spirit among staff with a deep commitment to ensuring the best possible outcomes for all students.
- There is a friendly supportive school culture in which all students, teachers and parents feel respected and valued, resulting in high attendance rates.
- All staff have high expectations of students and encourage them to be aspirational.
- All members of the school community are dedicated to driving forward the improvements in academic performance seen in the past year.
- Students are proud of their school and value the care and guidance they receive from staff.
- The school uses data very well to understand the performance and progress of all groups of students.
- The professional development of all staff is given a high priority with many opportunities to observe and reflect upon good practice.
- Teachers plan together well to adapt the curriculum so that it is relevant for students.
- Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions make the best use of available resources to promote students' achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that teachers use data to plan for differentiated work in general class lessons that fully engages all students.
- Produce clear measurable plans and goals for improvement at grade and department level as well as at whole school level.
- Set interim goals for grade, department and whole school plans so that progress towards their achievement can be measured more easily.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with some well-developed features.

The principal has a clear vision for the school based on giving students the skills and confidence they need to succeed as scholars. One student said, “They have given me the courage to pass everything.” In achieving this aim she has built up a strong team of enthusiastic teachers, who take full advantage of the high quality coaching available. The culture of respect in the school is combined with one of accountability, so that everybody knows and follows what is expected of them.

The school knows itself well. In the past two years performance has improved because data is used increasingly effectively to give support to individual students and to provide them with ambitious goals. This includes the designated periodic assessment materials implemented this year under empowerment school status. Students trust their teachers and work hard to achieve their targets. Innovative staffing and scheduling choices give all teachers opportunities to work with small groups and enable English language learners to make particularly rapid progress. Parents value the work of the school and its open door policy.

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.

All teachers gather and use data effectively to build up a thorough knowledge of the performance of each student in their class. Weekly assessments are used to identify gaps in knowledge so that immediate intervention can occur. The principal keeps electronic records of all the data on each student and analyzes these for trends and the performance of different groups, including by class, grade and ethnicity. This data is accessible to all faculty. The mathematics coach has done an in-depth study into why students with similar starting points perform differently over time. Designated periodic assessment materials such as the Princeton Review are used well alongside the school’s wide range of existing standardized and diagnostic materials. As teachers loop up with their students into the next grade each year, they have a very deep understanding of the progress students are making. They believe this has contributed to the accelerated growth in performance of the majority of students.

Special education alternative assessments show many students closing the achievement gap. English language learners are assessed frequently for fluency and groups are well staffed to promote proficiency. Careful scrutiny of data allows school leaders to clearly identify other categories of interest to the school. For example, higher achieving students are identified early and given enrichment programs that extend their learning. The school compares itself to its past performance and to other similar schools. Additionally, the

administration actively seeks similar schools beyond its designated peer horizons in order to make more accurate comparisons about its present and past performance.

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

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school’s collaborative philosophy ensures that teachers meet regularly in grade, subject and departmental teams to review data and plan next steps. They set challenging goals for student performance, such as that at least five students in each class will make two years’ progress in one year. They monitor the performance of these pupils very closely and last year all met their targets. Teachers each have five periods per week to devote to intensive support. Plans for students are clearly recorded, especially those in special education. Developments in classes, grades, subjects and departments are discussed but not formally set out with measurable goals and timescales. This makes it difficult to know when the objective has been achieved, and to monitor progress towards it. Multi-disciplinary meetings are held weekly to discuss the needs of the school’s most vulnerable students and prompt action taken to support them. This groups changes in response to data analysis.

The school’s high expectations are made clear to all students at every opportunity and they are invited to engage with the principal in making the right choices to ensure success when graduating on to high school. A range of “scholarly behaviors” are expected, stressing students take personal responsibility for their own learning. A recent innovation of asking students to comment specifically on their learning is providing staff with insights. For example, they discovered that girls learn better in single sex groups where they are more willing to contribute to lessons. This is informing plans for future groupings. Parents are kept fully informed about their children’s progress and state that communication with the school is very good. They value the monthly parent workshops where issues of mutual interest are discussed. Annual surveys ensure that school leaders keep abreast of parental opinion and they are responsive to suggestions.

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 delivers a carefully planned curriculum which meets all mandatory requirements. Coaches and teachers meet regularly to customize the curriculum to suit the needs of students. They use data very well to highlight areas for modification, such as in 6th grade mathematics where gaps in students’ knowledge are addressed before teaching the full standard. Meaningful links are made across content areas, so that the art program incorporates mathematical understanding and the media suite is used to support writing through television scripts. Students acquire scientific concepts while restoring bicycles in the recycle-a-bicycle program.

The school monitors the effectiveness of the curriculum on student outcomes and makes adjustments so that it is more closely aligned to their differentiated needs. This works

successfully in small groups for intensive support. The curriculum for English language learners is particularly effective in ensuring their progression towards fluency. In general education classes the work is occasionally not differentiated enough, and results in some students not making the progress they could either because the work is too difficult or too easy. The principal uses data surrounding the performance of heterogeneous classes to hold teachers accountable for their students' progress.

Teachers know their subjects well and convey their enthusiasm to students through interesting lessons, with a good mixture of instruction, discussion and group and individual activity. Resources are used well to engage students. Some classes have interactive smart boards and the school's distance learning center enables students to interact with students in schools in different countries. Every 6th grader is given their own Internet-enabled lap top computer to take home with instructions for them and their parents on how to get the most out of it. This enables them to undertake research outside the classroom.

Students greatly appreciate all the school does to support them. A student commented, "They believe in us. They try not to pressure us so as not to overwhelm us." This culture of respect motivates students to behave very well and to do their best. It means they are confident about approaching staff with any concerns they may have. As teachers know students so well they plan scheduling around the areas where development is most needed, arranging extra classes to ensure no ground is lost. Creative decisions about budgeting and staffing have meant extra coaches and bilingual staff being recruited, with a beneficial impact on professional development and the progress of English language learners.

The school's attendance figures are consistently above average because highly effective systems are in place to track absence and make immediate contact with homes. The principal views the data daily to look for patterns of absence and is proactive in working with those families who need the most support.

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 principal has a passion for education that communicates itself to students, parents and teachers alike. Her drive and determination have effected considerable change since the school was established. Her pursuit of excellence characterizes the systems and procedures of the school and ensures that it runs extremely smoothly. The principal is greatly respected by teachers, parents and students alike, who have all signed up to her vision. Potential staff members undergo a three day selection process during which they are given the toughest classes to teach, and are expected to share the principal's commitment to using data rigorously to inform their practice in setting goals and high expectations for student performance.

The principal and assistant principal conduct daily walkthroughs as well as regular, formal observations of instruction. An innovative program of video recording means the principal and teacher can watch the lesson together and discuss what is happening. Teachers are given clear points for development which are tracked. Part of this process is to evaluate the impact of professional development upon classroom practice, which is considerable. Additionally, teachers work collegially with coaches to improve their practice and have an

open door policy of peer observation, whereby anybody is free to observe anybody else at any time.

This collaborative approach engenders rich discussions in subject, grade and departmental teams, when teachers and coaches review data together in order to plan an instructional approach that will best impact on student outcomes. They also comment informally upon progress towards plans, but they do not currently measure this objectively. Professional development is designed to further school aims, such as in promoting more differentiated planning in general class lessons. There are productive partnerships for teachers with outside bodies such as the teachers' college, and for students a wide range of enrichment opportunities including Chess In Schools, the New York Restoration Project and the Children's Aid Society.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has good structures for monitoring the progress of individual students and compares this across class, grade and school level. Teachers make use of frequent interim assessments to refocus the work of students promptly according to their identified needs. Interventions often consist of spending more time going over the original work, or teaching it again in a different way

The Comprehensive Education Plan gives a succinct commentary on the school's progress in meeting its goals, and sets out plainly the key plans for the future. It demonstrates that leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop, and they involve the faculty in contributing to this evaluation. The many discussions that take place at grade, subject and departmental level inform this process. However, plans do not set interim goals by which progress towards their achievement can be measured, and much of the reviewing is informal. It is also more difficult for teachers to assess the success of the plans because they do not set specific criteria by which they might be measured. In the case of curriculum plans, these are measurable by how much students are able to cover, and coaches and teachers modify them in the light of what the data reveals about students' progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Patria Mirabal Middle School (MS 324)	∅	✓	+
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	