



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Harbor Heights Middle School

Middle School 349

**549 Audubon Avenue
New York
NY 10040**

Principal: Monica Klehr

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Reviewers: Kath Wood & Steve Szemerenyi

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Harbor Heights Middle School opened in September 2006 to provide a specialist education for Spanish speaking recent arrivals to the country, many of who have interrupted formal education in their country of origin. Current enrollment is 203 students in grades 6 through 8, all of whom have Hispanic ethnicity. Around ninety percent of the students are from the Dominican Republic with others from Ecuador, Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico and Columbia. There are no students with individualized education plans as part of the special education program because most students have not been in the country long enough or have not brought the relevant paperwork to the United States with them. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding for 84% of the students which is above the City average. Attendance at Harbor Heights is very high when compared with similar and City schools as is presently averaging at over 96%.

The school shares a campus with five other schools. Four high schools share the main building where one third of Harbor Heights' students work on the fifth floor. The rest of the staff and students are located in trailers in the school grounds, sharing space with another middle school. In September, the other middle school will move to their new building and Harbor Heights will take over their ten trailers and move out of the main building. Although this will alleviate some of the challenges of sharing a site, for example the need to go through the lengthy scanning process several times each day, other difficulties, such as access to gymnasium and cafeteria facilities and outdoor moves between each class, will remain until the school is re-housed under one roof.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is highly respected by staff, students and all members of the school community.
- There is a clear vision and sense of purpose for the development of the school.
- Students feel safe, well cared for and respected by their teachers.
- Students enjoy coming to school and attendance is excellent.
- Teamworking, collaboration and relationships between teachers are strong.
- There are high expectations for student performance.
- Intervention and support programs are carefully selected to meet the needs of the students.
- Parents value the work of the school and are very supportive of its goals and plans.
- The school has made a good start in setting up systems to enable data collection.
- The split site has been organized and managed to create as little disruption as possible for students and teachers.

What the school needs to improve

- Analyze and use all available data to create a complete picture of the knowledge and skills of each student.
- Develop consistent school data formats and systems that are easy to understand and use these in comparing progress within classes, subjects and grades.
- Ensure that professional development programs are carefully differentiated to meet the needs of all teachers.
- Provide more frequent opportunities for inter-visitation and the sharing of good practice in instruction across the school.
- Build on the range of instructional strategies to enhance student concentration and engagement.
- Ensure that whole school plans have clear, measurable goals, interim targets and agreed timescales for completion.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Harbor Heights Middle School has had a challenging first year. The new principal has worked hard to establish a positive and supportive climate in a school that is on a shared site, is mostly situated in a series of trailers, has few facilities and where most of the students are recent arrivals to the country speaking little or no English. The principal and staff have effectively risen to these challenges and have begun to develop systems and procedures to enable them to function with minimal disruption to the education of the students in their care. Good relationships are evident within the school and with the wider community, and parents are very positive about the quality of education received by their children. All the staff are either English as a second language licensed or have bilingual extension to their content licenses, and programs are carefully chosen to meet the specific language needs of the students. The school has made a good start in establishing systems and structures for the collection and use of data to monitor student progress and to provide appropriate support and intervention. Goals and plans for the next academic year are presently under review and will build upon successes this year to continue to move the school forwards.

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 proficient.

The school has made a good start in data collection. On entry, all students are tested on the Language Assessment Battery in both English and Spanish to provide a baseline for reading, writing, speaking and listening achievement. This information, along with parental choice surveys, determines the designation of each student to either a free standing English as a second language class or bilingual education. In addition, students are tested using NYSESLAT, Harcourt Brace and Princeton Review alongside interim assessments provided within the mathematics, science and social studies programs. The information gathered is used to identify individual needs and to provide specific support or interventions for individual students. Although some of this data indicates the relative progress of students across classes, grades and subject areas, the principal is aware that a uniform, easy to understand, at-a-glance tracking system is required to ensure that teachers have a full picture of student achievement across the school.

All of the students are English language learners with Hispanic ethnicity. There are no students with formally diagnosed special education needs but school information and assessment results indicate that at least nine students are likely to have had eligibility in their country of origin and the principal is following up this data. One group of special interest to the school are those students who have had interrupted formal education. This group constitutes almost half, 49%, of the student population. As a result, achievement for this group is below grade expectations and the school has to work hard to instill a high work ethic and enjoyment in learning. As a new school, there are not yet any results to

compare with similar schools or standardized assessments to review longitudinally. The school aims to introduce such comparators next year and will begin to disaggregate data into other groups of interest including gender variations and sub-divisions of Hispanic ethnicity.

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.

Because of the specific organization and nature of the school, goals and plans have largely been connected with establishing systems, structures and procedures during this academic year. Development of teamworking and collaboration between staff has been a major focus. As a result, good systems are now in place and the strong relationships evident throughout the school indicate that Harbor Heights is well placed to continue to improve. Current goals and plans are, however, related to longer-term aims and do not yet have the interim stages with agreed timescales for completion that make them objectively measurable.

Goals and targets have been identified for the focus group of students with interrupted formal education (SIFE). Baseline data is used to identify their specific needs to enable small group instruction, after school intervention programs and the resources required to teach the New York standards in the students’ home language. Progress in all subjects is monitored by subject teachers and is compared during departmental and grade meetings. At present, most of the student population is scoring well below grade level expectations, particularly in English language arts. Students are typically working at level 1 in this subject and the school is providing additional support and appropriate interventions for whole classes, groups and individuals to good effect. The majority of students are showing growth within the level and some are now working at higher levels. High achieving students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of lunchtime clubs and this group will be an area of focus for next year with special programs and instructional activities provided. Parents and students agree that the school has high expectations for performance. There is an open door policy and parents appreciate the high level of information and support provided to help their children to achieve. Parents have regular opportunities to participate in the life of the school and attend workshops, presentations and conferences. Continuous improvement drives the whole school community, including the students and their parents.

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 proficient.

The school has selected the curriculum very carefully to meet the specific needs of this student population. Although firmly based on the mandated curriculum and State standards, programs have been introduced to provide approaches and interventions for English language learners. The teachers viewed a range of materials and considered that conventional programs such as Wilson and Great Leaps were not appropriate for this specific student group and thus sought alternative solutions. Sheltered instructional

observational protocol (SIOP) is used to teach the English language through other curriculum subjects and RIGOR, a phonics-based approach to reading in both Spanish and English is being piloted with great success so far. Students use the Riverdeep math program and 'Destination' math in the computer lab for support and intervention in that area of learning. 'Access' programs support English language learning in science and social studies. The school has provided lunchtime enrichment sessions for journalism, music, art, dance, photography and year books this year, despite limited resources and space and intends to introduce dance and art as enrichment from September.

Teachers feel accountable for their students' outcomes and want them to succeed. Systems and structures for using data sources to plan and differentiate their work accordingly have begun to develop but are at an early stage. As a result, although intervention programs are carefully differentiated, not all lessons are planned to meet the needs of individuals or groups. In some classes all the students have the same tasks or activities so that the work is too hard for some and too easy for others. This leads to a lack of student focus and engagement which, in turn, results in low level disruption. In the best lessons teachers prepare interesting activities for groups of students to match their levels of achievement and students respond very positively. Students report that they are however very happy in school, reflected in the excellent attendance levels. They believe that their teachers care about them, want them to succeed and are prepared to always be there when they have difficulties with their work or have personal problems. This is one of the main contributors to the excellent attendance that the school has achieved.

Staffing, scheduling and budgetary decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data but are also driven by the restrictions within the school site. The principal has used flexible scheduling to provide common preparation and meeting time for the teachers and to allow for movement between buildings for lessons. The trailers provide an unattractive learning environment for the students, but great care and effort has been taken to add flower troughs in outside areas and stimulating displays of student work inside the buildings.

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 proficient.

Selection processes for staff are precisely aligned to the needs of the school population. In addition to full certification for specialist English language learner teaching, staff are expected to be well traveled, have experience in multicultural education and be committed to supporting overseas learners. Teachers are expected to have high expectations for student performance and a good understanding of the use of data. The school faculty will continue to grow next year with the addition of an assistant principal with responsibility for data analysis and management. This year, professional development has been focused on selection and understanding of the instructional programs alongside regular weekly opportunities to have common preparation meeting time in subjects and grades. Other opportunities include lead teacher attendance at central training sessions, regional office meetings for English language learner teachers and university mentoring from 'Teach for America' and 'Teaching Fellows' for newly hired staff. The school has not yet had the opportunity to differentiate professional development based on individual needs but intends to work on this aspect next academic year. The principal regularly observes classrooms and has a good understanding of each teacher's skills and abilities. However, challenges in scheduling due to the split site have resulted in few opportunities for teacher

inter-visitation or the sharing of good practice. The principal is aware of the value of creating more time for this aspect of the school's work in order to continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school and to enable candid self and peer evaluation of instructional practice.

The principal has quickly gained the respect of the students, teachers, parents and the wider community and has good capacity to move the school forward. Despite the early stage in development and the adverse conditions, systems and structures are firmly in place to ensure that the school runs smoothly. This will be further improved as the school extends into the additional trailers rather than using the main building. Good partnerships have been established with YMHA to provide after school homework help and arts programs, with Washington Heights Inwood Coalition to develop peer mentoring training and with the Urban Advantage program.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan was designed at the start of the school year with proposed goals and plans for achievement. The goals contain largely long-term targets and do not include specific interim goals or timescales for achievement. In the spring, seven members of staff participated in a retreat to reflect on the progress made in order to begin to make adjustments in the light of current practice. This proved to be a valuable exercise as it became evident that not all of the stated goals were objectively measurable and were not commonly understood by all staff. As a result, the next whole school plan is being developed differently with increased input from the school community through a series of meetings to discuss policy, procedures and specific areas of focus. The existing plan will be used to drive forward school improvement strategies to ensure improved student outcomes. At present, the monitoring of student progress focuses on individual achievement in separate subject areas rather than providing a full picture of what students know and can do. In addition, although teachers keep careful records, there are insufficient systems in place to easily compare the progress of classes, grades or subject areas to inform school leaders of required resource or intervention needs. This means that revision of plans cannot always be made quickly enough to impact on student performance. The principal has a clear vision and sense of purpose for the future of the school and aims to use the lessons learned during this first year to enable the school to grow and develop effectively.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Harbor Heights Middle School (MS 349)	∅	✓	+
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		