



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Children's Workshop School**

**Public School 361**

**610 East 12 Street  
New York  
NY 10009**

**Principal: Maria Velez-Clarke**

**Dates of review: January 16 – 17, 2007**

**Reviewer: Jo Storrs**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Children's Workshop School is an elementary school in East Village serving 243 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 37% White, 13% Black, 34% Hispanic and 14% Asian. Five percent are English language learners and nearly 9% are special education students in two self-contained classrooms. About 15% of students in general education classes have individual education plans. The school is not eligible for Title 1 funding. In 2005, there was a small dip in attendance to 91.5%, which was just below the average for similar and City schools. Attendance is improving now. Most students live in the community but about 25% travel from Brooklyn.

The school has formed productive partnerships with Manhattan Country School and Turtle Bay Music School to enrich the curriculum and widen students' perspectives. The parents have raised funds to build and equip a large library. There was a high turnover of teachers in September when almost a half left and six new teachers joined the school.

## Part 2: Overview

### **What the school does well**

- The principal's vision and high expectations of every student permeates the school.
- The cabinet is enthusiastic and dedicated to meeting the needs of every student.
- The principal and cabinet use data well to raise academic performance.
- The extended day is used effectively to improve the progress and performance of students at risk.
- The stimulating inter-related curriculum is carefully linked to each student's needs.
- The extensive community links and the range of extracurricular activities enrich the curriculum and students' experiences.
- The instructional programs interest and engage many students in their work.
- Staff and teachers work together harmoniously to improve learning.
- Parents support the school well and are involved in their children's education.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Continue to develop consistent systems to assess and monitor students' progress and performance.
- Ensure recent improvements and changes are documented and reviewed to inform future targets and the comprehensive education plan.
- Help all teachers to use data effectively to differentiate lesson planning and challenge all students.
- Extend students' involvement in evaluating their own progress and setting their own targets for improvement.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal's vision and high expectations of every student permeate the school. She works tirelessly to create a caring and inclusive atmosphere where the cultural diversity of students is celebrated. She has a great understanding of an experiential curriculum and the personal development of the students. The cabinet fully supports her vision and is committed to ensuring the academic performance of each student. They work enthusiastically with the principal to provide a rich educational experience for every student that is carefully assessed and evaluated. The use of data and flexible groupings and programs has led to improvements in test results in English language arts, mathematics and science. The extended day is used creatively to improve the progress and performance of students at risk. The principal and cabinet frequently review and adjust goals and plans to meet the diverse needs of the students. Staff and teachers work together harmoniously to improve learning. New teachers are supported effectively to undertake their roles and responsibilities for students' academic and personal development. The strengths of the school include the involvement of parents with their children's education and the community links that enhance the curriculum and students' engagement. Students enjoy learning and behave well towards each other.

### 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 thoroughly appraises data from State, City and internal tests to compare the performance of groups, grades and individuals at regular meetings. Interim assessments and standardized tests are used effectively to understand the needs and performance of each student. The principal carefully checks each student's academic progress and personal development. With experienced teachers, she carefully compares test results with each student's academic profile to check for disparities and to determine goals for improvement. The lack of consistent assessment systems in reading, however, presents difficulties for new teachers in particular as it was teachers who have left who could explain these records. To address this problem, the school is developing whole-school procedures to provide uniformity of practice and consistency of use. The data from regular standards-based assessments of students' work, observations and conferences between students and teachers is regularly summarized and discussed. This enables the progress and performance of all students at or above level and particularly those at risk to be assessed and goals to be set. The principal and experienced teachers are skilled at identifying patterns that need swift, but suitable intervention to stop larger problems developing.

The school regularly monitors the progress of individuals and groups of students in academic and developmental areas. The principal and cabinet have a very detailed

knowledge of each student and their performance so only look at ethnic data to organize classes to provide cultural diversity. The performance of special education students and English language learners is regularly checked by faculty, staff and academic intervention services. This information is methodically communicated to the principal and cabinet through formal and informal discussions and meetings to keep them fully abreast of students' progress and goals. The school compares its performance each year with similar and City schools and its own previous performance to ensure it continually improves.

**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 with some well-developed aspects.**

The school knows its community well and works hard to meet the diverse demands of all groups. Data is discussed systematically at collaborative faculty meetings and shared regularly with the principal, cabinet and school leadership team. It is used effectively to set priorities and to organize classes. Priorities are agreed in the comprehensive education plan to raise students' performance. Two key long-term goals are to continue to improve students' skills and test results in literacy and math. They are supported by short-term goals, success criteria and people responsible for each goal. Goals are translated collaboratively by teachers into grade and class goals during the summer retreat and at other meetings. Generally, students work in heterogeneous class groups, but in math they are grouped according to standard levels and State and City math test results have significantly improved. The strategies for these improvements have not been documented so the school is unable to identify what worked, where further adjustments could be made or used the information to inform future improvement goals. The academic intervention services and paraprofessionals provide effective support for individual and groups of special education students and English language learners.

Parents endorse the school's high expectations and are very pleased with the care and progress of their children. They are very supportive of the school and their children's education. They receive regular information about class programs and children's targets and comprehensive progress reports that enables parents to support children at home and keep track of progress and goals. They are fully informed and involved if their children require extra help. Students know they are expected to do their best and behave well. The principal, cabinet, school leadership team and intervention services are dedicated to improving students' performance. Strategies are in place to recognize students with problems or at risk of falling behind and providing early intervention.

**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 with well-developed aspects.**

The school uses data to meet mandatory requirements within an inter-related curriculum focused on improving literacy, mathematics and science. Community links with a residential farm, extracurricular activities and experts working in the school broaden and enrich the curriculum and students' experiences. Grade teachers use data effectively to

design inclusive instructional programs that interest and engage students. These programs motivate students to work hard, accelerate learning and raise performance. Regular analysis of students' work at collaborative meetings enables teachers to adjust plans when required. Teachers are well-supported to differentiate lesson planning by literacy and mathematics coaches but instruction does not yet consistently meet the diverse needs of all students.

The principal and school leadership team use data well to align resources to school goals and students' needs. The budget, grants, staffing and all resources are linked carefully to school and students' goals and used effectively to benefit all students. Effective scheduling enables flexible groupings and utilization of faculty; these are helping students to make good progress. It enables cabinet members to be non-class-based. They are responsible for the progress of all students and for supporting all teachers. With the principal, they keep a close check on instructional programs and the performance of each student. They work closely with academic intervention services staff to provide excellent support and intervention programs for individuals and groups of students. Administration, teachers and staff are very aware of and responsive to students' academic and emotional needs. They are very concerned about the students and every student has a number of teachers and staff they trust. Students are respected and their cultural diversity celebrated. They are thoughtful towards each other and behavior is good. Older students are reading buddies for younger students and they look after their 'buddies' on school activities such as ice-skating. Attendance dipped slightly in 2005 but the school has tightened its systems so it is now monitored daily and is improving.

**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 with some well-developed features.**

There are very good relationships across the whole school community. Careful thought is given to appointing new teachers who receive an effective induction program and are very well supported to improve teaching. Professional development is a high priority and aligned to curriculum, academic and individual needs. All teachers are willing to take new ideas on board and to adjust their instruction to aid students' learning. The principal monitors teachers formally and observes every day. She gives regular effective feedback and advice to teachers and staff so instruction enables learning and students make progress. Cabinet members model good teaching and help teachers to review student outcomes effectively so instruction and learning are improved. Coaches support individual teachers and attend regular collaborative grade meetings to improve instruction. Self- and peer-evaluation are promoted at reviews with administration and grade meetings. New approaches, best practice and other information is shared, discussed and used to inform instruction. All these strategies are effectively improving students' performance.

Teachers bring a range of information, including examples of leveled students' work and observations about individual students to grade meetings. This helps new teachers to differentiate lesson planning so it matches students' needs and provides an appropriate level of challenge, but is not yet fully in place. The principal is respected and liked and in turn values teachers, staff, parents and students. She is thorough in dealing with issues and effects change calmly and professionally. The school community is happy and enjoys working in the school. There are comprehensive systems and procedures and the school's atmosphere is peaceful and focused. There is a clear chain of command and

structures in place if the principal is not available. There are very effective development programs, supported by partnerships with outside bodies to help students to keep healthy and become responsible, caring citizens. For example the 'Girls' Project' is designed to meet the personal needs of girls in the 5th grade. The parent coordinator organizes helpful workshops programs to help parents to become involved in their children's learning.

**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.**

All data is thoroughly monitored by administration and increasingly by all teachers and used to realign goals and plans. The principal and cabinet are constantly striving to raise standards to meet their high expectations for the students. They take immediate action to secure improvements when necessary. Most decisions are reached collaboratively and focus on improving learning. The leadership team survey parents and use this information alongside all other data to monitor the effectiveness of goals in the comprehensive education plan. The progress of goals and plans in this plan will be reviewed in March and successes and new goals identified. Several members of the leadership team are fairly new, but they have been well briefed to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

The progress of each student is carefully monitored through diagnostic and interim assessments, the outcomes of observations and portfolios of dated and annotated students' work. These demonstrate performance and the rate of progress of each student. They are discussed at collaborative grade meetings and shared with administration; swift action is taken if a student is falling behind. There is an open-door policy and principal and office staff keep written notes of the reasons students come to the office and parental communications. The principal follows these through thoroughly. Teachers discuss learning targets with students during reading conferences but students are not consistently actively engaged in evaluating and setting their own learning goals. Learning is organized flexibly to meet the needs of students. The part-time specialist supports the few English language learners very successfully individually or in groups separately and in class. This is helping these students to make good academic progress. The school is effectively and efficiently led and the constant evaluation of performance is helping students to learn effectively and perform. Teachers modify student goals and plans where necessary.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME</b> Children's Workshop (PS 361)	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			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"> <li>ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	