



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Marte Valle Secondary School

Intermediate School / High School 509

**145 Stanton Street
New York
NY 10002**

Principal: Jayne Godlewski

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Reviewer: Peter Lewis

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Marta Valle Secondary School serves an area in the lower East Side of Manhattan. There are just over 600 students in grades 6 to 12, which is a change from previous years when the school provided a grade 7 to 12 education. Students come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds with most, at 66% being Hispanic, 19% Black, 13% Asian and less than 2% White. A comparatively very high, 23% of students have individualized education programs which determine support across a wide range of needs. The school is also barrier free and, as such, provides education for students with limited mobility. There are 14% of students who are English language learners, of whom a small proportion enter the school at a low level of English acquisition. Attendance has improved as a result of the school's focus on developing appropriate systems and is now broadly in line with the average across the city. The school is Title 1 funded.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a very clear vision for the stages necessary to the development of the school.
- Since her appointment, the principal has secured considerable improvements in the tone and safety of the building which has created an effective climate for learning.
- High expectations of students and staff are well modeled by the principal.
- When suitably challenged, students have very positive attitudes to their work which are well fostered by the majority of staff.
- The school makes good use of professional development in achieving its goals for improvement.
- Improvements in teaching mean that there are examples of very good practice that the school is able to use in modeling its high expectations.
- Parents feel that the school is doing a good job.

What the school needs to improve

- Generate and organize assessment information so that it is readily accessible and gives a clear picture of the attainment and progress of different groups of students.
- Ensure that teachers receive assessment data at the start of each year in time for them to identify target groups of students and plan lessons that are effectively differentiated.
- Ensure that the identification of good practice in instruction includes the requirement that all lessons will make clear what is to be learned.
- Refine the school development priorities so that they include an achievable set of short term annual goals, recorded in such a way as to enable progress towards their achievement to be tracked.
- Identify a senior member of staff to be responsible for the collation of assessment information and for the development of assessment practice.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school.

Although Marta Valle Secondary School is an undeveloped school overall it has nonetheless taken huge strides in the two and a half years since the principal's appointment.

Systems and procedures have been put into place and the principal has ensured that senior students have the required number of credits to validate their graduation. Great improvements have been made to the tone, safety and appearance of the building. New appointments, particularly at senior level have enabled the principal to make use of the improvements already made in creating a climate for learning to begin to introduce changes to the curriculum and to teaching. That these have already begun to make a difference is demonstrated, for example, by improvements in the number of students who have moved from Level 1 to Level 2. Staff in leadership positions demonstrate a good understanding of the areas in which the school needs to improve and generally provide good support to the principal in bringing about these changes. The school has begun to make use of data to build a more comprehensive picture of student attainment so that it can plan improvements and interventions in a more focused way. It is very aware that more needs to be done, and has a suitable range of plans in place that, when refined and simplified, have the potential to secure success.

The principal and other school leaders have very positive relationships with their students, which have the potential to set the tone for other staff. Students respond very well to this level of warmth and respect and, as a result, interactions by the principal and assistant principals in classrooms and hallways have been instrumental in establishing a calm and controlled atmosphere. Students and their parents think that the school is improving, although students do refer to occasions in lessons when the work that is planned for them is too easy.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

The principal has begun to gather data which has the potential to build the picture of patterns of student attainment across the school. At present, this exists in several different formats, and is not coherently organized by grade or subject. Little real comparison is made with the performance of similar schools. The school has collated cohort information in response to comparisons with previous performance and concerns that, for example, high school students have underachieved despite receiving high school diplomas. This has resulted in the school having to undertake a review and realignment of the curriculum with the result that student achievement has increased significantly. There is little comparison of student achievement across classes and the way in which data is currently organized inhibits the analysis of the progress of, for example, boys and girls, or of students of different ethnicities. As a result, it is difficult for the school to establish patterns

of student achievement, or to plan interventions to ensure that weaknesses are addressed in a consistent way. An exception to this, which demonstrates the school's commitment to making better use of data, is in the identification of students whose low attainment means that they have the greatest need. Baseline information, as well as recently introduced interim assessments, are used at 9th grade in informing decisions about the provision of 'Ramp up or Read 180' program allocation. Overall, special education student progress is tracked effectively. Individualized education plans are in place and the progress made against identified targets is monitored sufficiently to enable modifications to be made where appropriate. In a similar way, the school has begun to compare English language arts attainment between 6th and 7th grades in order to establish a starting point for assessment and focused instruction. This has the potential to provide information which will enable teachers to plan instruction that is more precisely tailored to students' needs. However, the wide range of data formats that is provided by the forty two feeder schools makes in depth analysis difficult.

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

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

The school is in the early stages of collating assessment information to assist in planning work for its students and in setting goals for their achievement. While this has begun to secure some success, these systems have however been very recently introduced. Currently there remains too wide a range in the effectiveness with which teachers use this information to plan activities that are clearly linked to objectives for learning and which, as a result, meet the needs of all students. The school has established goals both through the format of the Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal's own performance review. Priorities, including establishing high expectations through teachers' planning, and the establishment of differentiated instruction are appropriate in addressing areas of weakness in the school. However, they are couched in very general terms and are not sufficiently specific in terms of outcome, particularly in relation to improvements in student attainment. In a similar way, although the school now expects teachers to use assessment as a regular feature of classroom instruction, there remains too much inconsistency in the degree to which teachers assess student competence, and use this information in planning subsequent work. The school recognizes that an essential starting point in this is the provision of class and group attainment profiles across subjects at the start of each year. This will assist in setting achievement goals for students and the school, at present, is at a very early stage of implementing this strategy.

The use of assessment information to identify students who are in need of enhanced support is effective. Results from each marking period are analyzed and used in allocating students to small group instruction sessions. While the school recognizes that the support provided in these classes is inconsistent, none the less there is evidence that the majority of students who attend make accelerated progress. As a result parents feel that, although expectations are not always high enough, their children are well supported, and know that staff are accessible should they have concerns.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is undeveloped.

Since the time of her appointment two years ago, the principal has had to devote considerable time to setting an appropriate tone for the school and in establishing a curriculum that not only fulfilled State and District mandates but which also provided for students’ needs. In this she has secured much success, while recognizing that there remains more to do. The introduction of an emphasis on positive behavior management strategies has been exceptionally well modeled by the principal, who has developed strong and positive relationships with her students. This has begun to impact across the school so that, in the best instruction, expectations are clear and examples of poor behavior are not allowed to get in the way of learning. There remain too many occasions, however, when a lack of challenge in lessons results in student disengagement. The curriculum now fulfills all requirements and the school is working to develop this further. Grade competencies have been developed for English language arts, which help teachers in assessing the progress that students are making and have the potential, when consistently applied, to enable staff to plan intervention strategies to address identified weaknesses.

The school’s introduction of a strengthened guidance team, and the scheduling decisions associated with this, are examples of the degree to which the school has ensured that its students’ personal needs are met as well as demonstrating perceptive budget and staffing management by the principal. Students say that they receive a good response to sharing concerns. At the same time, a strong emphasis on good attendance has resulted in improvements so that this is now close to the City average. In contrast, teachers’ accountability for improving student learning is limited by the fact that, in the majority of lessons, students are engaged on the same task regardless of their ability. As a result, progress amongst different ability groups is uneven. There are, however, examples of excellent practice which have the potential to be used as models in setting the expectation of ‘best practice’ in instruction.

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.

The principal has a clear understanding of the quality of instruction throughout the school. Information is gathered from formal and informal observations, predominantly undertaken by the principal, and is effectively used in informing discussion with staff and in identifying aspects of professional development. Externally based support services are appropriately used, while the school’s involvement with external initiatives, such as the State Education Department’s Quality Review Initiative have been successful in raising awareness of the need for improvement. As a result, more teachers want to take part in intervisitations in order to learn from others. Professional development is well linked to school goals and to the recently established personal goals for teachers, and is further supported through discussion at weekly faculty conferences. The school’s development is currently focused on the two parallel aspects of improving teachers’ skills of differentiation and introducing the ‘workshop model’ of instruction. Both of these areas are appropriate, although so recently introduced that changes in practice are embryonic at present. For example, most lessons continue to reflect teachers’ concern for moving through the curriculum so that

lessons tend to be planned in terms of what students will do rather than what they will learn.

The principal has ensured that staff expertise is beginning to be well used in modeling expectations and in securing improvement. Assistant principals attend grade meetings with the specific intention of ensuring a more coherent focus of data, while lead teachers have been selected primarily in relation to their ability to secure consistent improvements for their students. The principal is well respected by staff and students alike, and has instituted a good range of systems which ensure that day to day routines are understood and followed.

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

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

The school has begun to collect and use assessment data to establish goals for student achievement, and in assessing the degree to which improvements have been secured. This is a recently established and still developing initiative and there remain inconsistencies in the degree to which this information has been used across grades in identifying subject areas that require improvement. In strategic terms, data from Regents and scholarship reports give leaders in the school an appropriate understanding of the aspects of its work that are strong, and those areas which require some improvement. While this has led to the accurate identification of aspects of its work that require improvement, the resulting goals are couched in terms that are too general to enable progress towards their achievement to be tracked closely. Although, for example, the school has identified the need to improve teachers' ability to use data, particularly in planning lessons which match a range of student abilities, there is as yet no clearly stated action plan which defines the desired changes, how they will be identified, the timescale within which change will take place, or improvements in students' attainment that are planned to result. At the same time, the mechanisms that are in place for collating and analyzing data rely too heavily on the principal. This is an onerous task, and one which reduces the time available for her to oversee the work of the school on a strategic level. She recognizes the logical extension to work already undertaken to build the confidence of assistant principals in using data, is to appoint a senior member of staff to be responsible for assessment and its development.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Marte Valle Secondary School (IS/HS 509)	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.	X		
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.	X		
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.	X		
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.	X		
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3	X		
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	Ø	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.	X		
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.		X	
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.		X	
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	Ø	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.	X		
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.	X		
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.	X		
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5	X		