



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Central Park East 11

Public School 964

**19 East 103 Street
New York
NY 10029**

Principal: Naomi Smith

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Reviewer: David Herbert

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Central Park East 11 is an oversubscribed small option school with 204 students in kindergarten through grade 5. It became a new school three years ago, having previously functioned as a program as part of another school. Fifty two percent of students are Black and 37% are Hispanic with just under 11% White and 2% Asian or Native American. The school uses the opportunity to select students to ensure that there is a balanced multicultural mix in each class and grade. There are very few English language learners, all of whom speak Spanish. Special education students make up 18% of the school. Due to universal free lunch, all of the students are eligible for Title 1 funding. At 91% the attendance level is just below the average for similar schools in the City.

The school shares a building with two other schools and through the efforts of its own staff has enlivened its space with new paintwork to create a stimulating environment. Most classes are deliberately organized to bridge two grades, giving teachers and students the opportunity to spend two years together.

This year the school has chosen to join an empowerment zone of similar small schools to further its development work. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. They are also free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements. This school is currently engaged in a research project to design its own periodic assessment materials.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is successful in delivering its vision of education focused on providing 'activity rich classrooms' in which learning is characterized by inquiry and discovery.
- The principal is highly respected by staff, students and parents.
- The principal and faculty collaborate well, sharing their knowledge and experience of students to plan for their individual needs.
- Instruction is practical and engaging, successfully developing students' independence and responsibility for themselves.
- Teachers collate extensive data and observations on students and use it to monitor their individual performance and progress.
- There is a very strong partnership with parents who are well informed and engaged with the school's culture, and value what it offers their children.
- The curriculum is very well enriched by widespread experiences in the arts, partnerships with outside organizations, and opportunities for students to design their own activities.
- The school has a strong capacity to continue improving as a result of its good collaborative relationships and the valuing of all members of its community.
- The school is utilizing the new opportunities of joining the Empowerment Zone to further its own development.
- Students respond well to the school's philosophy and practice, showing confidence and relating well with staff and to each other.

What the school needs to improve

- Record assessment information in a more consistent format to aid accessibility and evaluation across the school.
- Extend the monitoring of individual students' performance by using data to evaluate and compare the performance of classes, grades and other groups to target areas for improvement.
- Collaboratively define more measurable interim and annual performance goals for classes and grades.
- Build on the best practice in differentiation to ensure consistency across all subjects and classes.
- Ensure that the impact of professional development on students' learning is evaluated to assess the effectiveness of initiatives.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Central Park East 11 is a school that sets out to create a particular model of education, and succeeds in this endeavor. Parents say that “the school understands how learning is enriched by the arts”, and that it “helps children to see themselves in different ways”.

Classrooms are lively and learning is largely based on practical exploration and inquiry. This engages students very well, requiring frequent collaboration between them, problem solving and independent thinking. Students enjoy their time at the school and grow in confidence and independence as a result of their instruction. This culture is led effectively by the principal who, with a committed staff, values each student as an individual and seeks ways for them to express their personal strengths across a broad curriculum. Work in the arts and music is strong and is seen as an important contributor to academic success. This is supported and extended by very effective partnerships with outside bodies.

The staff works well together, sharing a wide range of information and assessments on each student to plan for their individual needs. Curriculum planning, monitoring and evaluation are built on individual student data and extensive observational evidence. To extend the effectiveness of this the school needs to evaluate more data to compare the performance of classes, grades and other groups of students to ensure that all areas for improvement are identified and targeted. As a result of involvement in the Empowerment zone the school has begun to introduce Design Your Own periodic assessments in literacy and mathematics. These are at an early stage but are adding effectively to the data and evaluation already available.

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 overall.

Teachers collate a wide range of data about individual student performance. This includes reading, literacy and mathematics assessments together with observational and narrative recording. The variety of assessments provides staff with an extensive understanding of individual students’ needs. This is evaluated in grade meetings where teachers share their different perspectives on students, coming to a common view of their successes and development needs. Teachers keep running records and assessments in their own format, though new whole-school recording procedures are being trialed this year. Formal assessments, such as the Early Childhood Literacy Assessment are completed which give a comparative picture of each student’s performance and progress. This is used to confirm or challenge teachers’ own view of their students’ achievement.

The strengths and needs of students who are English language learners are monitored on an individual basis. Special education students are carefully assessed and tracked. The

school often explores new ways of gaining a full understanding of these students. For example, a group of teachers is currently studying students' perceptual development with the PerDev Institute to understand their needs in different ways. This has further benefit for the understanding of the performance of all students. There is a school-wide interest in collecting data in a way that builds a cohesive picture of all aspects of the students' development including the academic, creative and artistic, personal, social and emotional.

The school has placed its emphasis on monitoring and evaluating the performance of individual students and does this well. This individualized approach is more developed than wider comparisons of performance and progress between similar classes, different grades and other groups in the school. Data is available to complete this, but has not been compiled in an accessible format so that staff can share this information.

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 overall.

The school's focus on promoting the success of each student across a range of dimensions is reflected in the individual nature of goals that are set and the planning undertaken to achieve them. This is proficient. In an annual meeting each November, parents and teachers share information and complete individual goal sheets for each student. The rigor of these goals is variable, but is strong in the best practice. Teachers and other staff discuss students on an individual basis to ensure they are setting high expectations for them and are working together effectively to achieve them.

The attention given to improving the performance and progress of students in particular need is well developed. Building on the close knowledge of them, specific goals are set and their progress is monitored in detail. High expectations are set for all students. In addition to developing academic skills the school seeks to ensure that students have opportunities to grow and flourish creatively and artistically. Students are therefore challenged to take advantage of a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. There is a close relationship with parents, maintained through formal meetings, email and phone contact. Of particular note is the 'purple folder' or 'parent communicator' which students take home every day. This is used to share school information and provide an open channel of communication between teacher and parent about students' needs and achievements. One parent described it as "the umbilical cord of the school – keeping parents informed and nourished about what's going on".

Whole school goals for student achievement across classes, grades, subjects and groups are undeveloped. Teachers and the principal collaborated to write the Comprehensive Education Plan, which contains some broad goals for students' performance and progress, but this is not regarded as a working document during the year. The principal has recently formulated much more specific goals for progress and achievement in different subjects, to which teachers have contributed, though these do not yet form the basis of a school-wide plan.

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 makes positive choices about the curriculum and the nature of instruction to ensure that students get a stimulating experience with a high emphasis on the arts, combined with discovery and inquiry across all subjects. Resources have been enriched considerably with carefully planned book purchasing, resulting in a well-stocked library and an emphasis on reading in all classrooms. Reading books are leveled, so that students are challenged by a ‘just right’ choice of difficulty. The limited space available in the building has been used creatively to allow for a music room, library and computer suite and group rooms for intervention support and counseling. Staffing, budgeting and scheduling decisions have been made to prioritize student opportunities, such as the appointment of more coach and librarian time rather than administrative support. This has had a good impact on student performance.

The school has chosen to organize nearly all classes as bridging groups between two grades, so that teachers and students enjoy the benefit of working together for two years. This successfully supports opportunities for assessment and the subsequent alignment of instruction over time. Students take literacy classes in their bridged classes, with work differentiated to meet the needs of each grade group. In mathematics, following assessment and monitoring, the school has taken a collective decision to teach the subject in single grade groups from 2nd to 5th grade which enables teachers to differentiate their instruction better. Instruction is strongest in literacy where it has benefited from more continuous development. This is being consolidated so that instructional practice across all subjects and classes matches the best examples of differentiation. The engagement of students in lessons, based on activity-based learning, forms the core of the school’s aims. The well developed success in achieving this is visible in all classrooms. Teachers use well designed games and collaborative tasks to encourage students to think together and solve problems for themselves. This practice is a particular strength of the school. Procedures for managing attendance are well developed due to the close relationships built with families which are used to emphasize their accountability for sending their children to school.

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 well developed features.

The principal is highly respected by staff, students and parents. She embodies the qualities that she promotes across the school, maintaining an immovable belief that every student can achieve well, given the right opportunities. The school runs smoothly and calmly, due to its very strong sense of community. These elements are well developed and they successfully set the positive climate of the school.

Coaches, faculty and staff have been selected for their ability to contribute to the specific tone and aims of the school, and this has been successful. The commitment and capacity to use data has been a secondary priority, although coaches are proficient in this respect. This has been justified by student outcomes in literacy, and has indicated the need for more support in mathematics. Coaches are trusted and respected, enabling them to make

a very positive contribution to the development of instruction and achievement. The principal and faculty evaluate student performance together to see if they are meeting their aims for them. When assessment indicates that provision is not as effective as planned, it is changed quickly.

Professional development is well developed, enhancing the practice of individual teachers and the school as a whole. It is often made more effective through partnerships with organisations, such as the established work with Columbia Business School in developing good assessment and documentation systems. Most of the principal's frequent observation of classroom teaching is informal and is used to raise issues for discussion with teachers. Teachers welcome her comments and feedback, knowing that they will aid their development and that they will be phrased in a professional and supportive tone. Teachers have little opportunity to observe each other at present, leading to this aspect being proficient.

Very numerous partnerships with outside bodies are well developed. They enrich the curriculum, providing both direct services to students and professional development for teachers. They extend the experiences of students in the arts, musical, physical and health education, adding significant quality to students' progress and performance.

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 revision of school plans and interventions is carried out by evaluating the impact on each individual student on an ongoing basis, and by serving the needs indicated in interim review. Curriculum goals are reviewed through discussion between teachers at regular meetings, and adaptations to scheduling are made to respond to the needs that are identified. For example, in December, assessment data and feedback from teachers indicated that students had a need for more depth of experience in reading non-fiction, so the scheduling of units of work were adapted to allow for this.

The effectiveness of interventions is monitored through individual running assessment records and the close working relationship between staff. In such a small school, faculty who make interventions with students often support them across a number of years, and so come to know their needs extremely well. There are currently few formal comparisons made of student progress between classes, grades and groups to measure the progress of plans. This is undeveloped as there are very few measurable goals set, beyond individual student level, to enable such comparisons to be made. However, all of the information and data collected is used to review and program individual students well, making overall monitoring and revision of plans proficient.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Central Park East 11 (PS 964)	∅	✓	+
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	