



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Public School 120  
58 - 01 136 Street  
Queens  
NY 11355**

**Principal: Joan M Monroe**

**Dates of review: November 1 - 2, 2006  
Reviewers: Helen Donnellan and Tim Boyce**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 120 is a school for students from pre-kindergarten to grade 6, where the 900 students speak more than 20 languages. Sixty-nine percent of students are Asian, 24% Hispanic and the remainder is from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The most common first language for the students is Mandarin, followed by Spanish and English. A third of students are English language learners. There are just over 4% of special education students. The proportion of Title 1 students is in line with the average for the City. The number of students from recent immigrant families is almost double that found in similar schools. Attendance in 2005 was higher than other similar schools, although student stability was lower.

The principal took up her position in December 2005, and a second assistant principal took up post in September 2006, completing the new administrative team.

The trend in falling student numbers has recently been halted but a significant fall is anticipated for the end of the current academic year, when there will cease to be grade 6 students at the school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The impact of changes made by the recently appointed principal is being seen; for example, increases in achievement in mathematics and in NYESLAT scores by English language learners.
- The principal is well-organized and provides clear expectations for teaching and non-teaching staff.
- The principal is raising expectations for improving student outcomes through improved instruction methods.
- New management structures, including a strong instructional team, have been established to bring about change.
- The assistant principals work successfully with the principal, collaborating and sharing information.
- There is good classroom practice in some classes, where expectations of learning and behavior are high and students are actively engaged in learning.
- Students speak positively about the school and what they are being taught.
- The school welcomes parents as partners in their children's learning.
- Professional development is used successfully to improve performance.
- The school actively addresses poor attendance and lateness.

### What the school needs to improve

- Use data more effectively to identify students' prior attainment and to set goals.
- Ensure that the teaching matches student needs more closely, including that of special education students.
- Ensure that teachers consistently make it clear to students exactly what is expected of them during the class.
- Continue to improve unacceptable behavior through the use of positive management strategies.
- Ensure that teachers plan the use of additional adults so that they contribute effectively to teaching and learning.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The principal provides strong leadership with a commitment to change and support staff in this, through professional development. The administrative team is committed to raising student achievement and sharing good practice in instruction methods and practice. Since her appointment there has been improvement in the achievement of English language learners. Professional development is seen as key to making improvements. Special education students are well supported, although teachers are not always using additional adults in the classes well enough.

In the time since she took up her post the new principal has established an open working partnership with parents, sharing information with them on the curriculum and their children's progress. Parents feel more confident that their concerns are listened to in the new culture of the school.

The principal is driving the consistent use of data by all teachers, so that teaching is based on hard evidence of students' prior attainment, rather than teachers' intuitive judgments. Data needs to be used more extensively to ensure that instruction more closely matches the students' needs and expectations for students' future learning can be realistic.

### 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 principal has recently introduced changes in data collected to provide a more comprehensive view of progress made by students. Standardized tests in English language arts and New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) are now complemented by teacher records which are completed four times during each academic year. Interim assessments in mathematics and English language arts identify progress made by all students in grades 3 through 6. This information is used as the basis for specific intervention. Portfolios of student work are being more widely used to track student progress over time. The resource room staff supplement class teacher assessment information in literacy, to provide detailed information on the expressive and receptive language of special education students. This is used to inform specific intervention and support programs for those students.

Although data use is currently proficient, there is a commitment to raise the profile of data to encourage teachers to make greater use of the information to inform what they plan to teach and to track student performance. Teachers will then have a more informed picture of their students. Data is already being used to make decisions about student groupings, so that instruction can be more closely aligned to the needs of each student. Teachers are using state assessments, interim assessments and informal assessment data in this.

The principal and assistant principals scrutinize student performance regularly, detecting and addressing emergent patterns or trends. They have identified the need to show improvement in both reading and mathematic scores and are using data to track student performance during the year. At present the school does not compare the performance of different groups of students, so that insights into their progress and goals for improvement cannot yet be set.

**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.**

Changes have been made to establish the use of data by teachers to group students and plan instruction. The principal has made clear to teachers that they need to be accountable for the learning outcomes achieved by their students. The application of assessment data is core to this culture of accountability. Performance and progress made by all students is monitored regularly by the principal, so that the diverse range of the student outcomes is subject to scrutiny. Data indicated that English language arts achievement was in need of improvement and so additional intervention has been provided by Saturday schools and an after-school program, which gives personalized support to students. Preliminary data indicates that these interventions have been effective, with English language arts results having risen in 2006. The percentage of English language learners taking NYSESLAT who achieved advanced and proficient scores rose from 2005 to 2006.

Teachers use their ongoing records of strengths and weaknesses of individual student performance in reading and writing, to identify what needs to be focused on in future teaching. The principal has established collaborative working, to share information. This is illustrated clearly by the changes in the academic intervention service, where information is now collated and an overall picture of different agencies providing support for each student, along with the trigger for that particular intervention, is available. Personal intervention plans for special education students provide an ongoing record of previous intervention and future support needed, which means that all staff have a holistic picture of interventions and programs. There is a strong emphasis on preventing underachievement. The collaborative working relationship between providers of special education instruction ensures that resources are focused on bringing about real benefits for students in greatest need of improvement.

The school has become more open in working with parents and intends to continue working to build partnerships. A monthly letter provides regular updates and prompted one parent to comment that it, "makes us feel we’re all a team". On a day-to-day basis, staff communicate clearly with parents on curriculum issues as well as about the personal development of their children. Parents value the recent curriculum workshops, where information was presented in Mandarin, Spanish and English, to ensure that all families were able to understand the content. Further events are planned for mathematics and science, so that parents will be able to support their children’s learning at home.

Teachers now clearly recognize the need for the further analysis of assessment results. They are increasing their use of these to ensure that their teaching matches the needs of each student.

Students are articulate about the school's strengths and weaknesses and express their wish for a student representative body, "a group we trust to express our views."

**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 curriculum reflects the linguistic and cultural diversity of the students and staff. Multi-cultural events, such as the 'proverb basket', provide opportunities for students and members of the wider community to share and celebrate their home languages. Marking of Chinese New Year and Black History weeks in school allows all students to become aware of other global cultures.

The Teachers' College model for teaching English language arts is now being used with greater flexibility, so that teachers can be more creative in their teaching. Enrichment programs are being planned to supplement the curriculum and address the needs of all students more closely. However, teachers are not analyzing data well enough to gain a thorough understanding of students' prior attainment so that they can plan lessons with appropriate levels of challenge for different groups.

Budget decisions are made on the basis of students' documented needs. Staff preferences are taken into account when staff assignment decisions are being made, so that teachers' strengths are matched to student needs.

There is good teaching in some classes, where expectations of learning and behavior are high and students are engaged and active in their learning. Students speak positively about the school, the recent changes that have occurred and what they are taught. They value the time that adults take to listen to their concerns and are confident that any problems will be sorted out.

The principal is leading a positive reinforcement approach to addressing poor behavior, moving the school from an approach where attention was drawn to negative aspects. Behavior around the building is generally good, although staff have different expectations of acceptable behavior and this leads to some undisciplined transfers between classes. Absence from school is followed up promptly and where students do miss school, homework is provided to enable them to cover missed work. Lateness is also actively addressed, so that students do not miss any time. One student commented on the changes brought in by the new principal, "I didn't know what tardy or tardiness meant until [the new principal] arrived."

**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 assistant principals work closely with the principal, sharing information and addressing any issues that arise. The new instructional team is working hard to improve teaching and learning. Twice monthly grade conferences are held where staff teams review the curriculum and agree the future content, basing this on their observations of

students. At present, in the school's circumstances of reducing in numbers, there is little opportunity to appoint new staff.

The principal is passionate about using professional development as a tool for school improvement. The first priority is to ensure that teachers learn how to use data to inform their teaching. Literacy and mathematics coaches facilitate professional study groups, which support the development needs identified through the lesson observations carried out by the principal and administrative team. Some visits to schools have also been arranged for staff to observe recognized good practice. Following professional development activities, staff share their experience and learning with colleagues so that all are able to benefit.

In most classes, adults supporting students are used effectively, but this is not always the case. In some classes, teachers do not plan the use of support staff in lessons. This can lead to inefficiency. It also provides a poor role model to students. Not all teachers model high expectations for learning outcomes by students well enough to make clear what is and is not acceptable.

The principal is recognized by staff as having the capacity and drive to make the changes necessary to improve teaching and learning through more effective use of data. The impact of changes made by the principal can already be seen in improved achievements in mathematics and NYESLAT scores by English language learners. Staff value the principal's approach which makes clear the need for improvement through professional development and support. The principal is well-organized and staff are clear about what is expected of them, so the school runs smoothly. Students know what is expected of their behavior as rules are displayed throughout the school. The report cards make clear what they need to do to make progress in their learning.

There is an effective working relationship with guidance counselors in school and external partners, so that students and families receive unified services.

**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 principal recognizes the need to address low expectations and the capacity of the school to expect and achieve more. There is currently a strong focus on improving the use of data, increasing staff collaboration and introducing more rigor into the curriculum.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is reviewed by the leadership team. Procedures have recently been put in place to take account of the views of the wider school community, including staff and parents. Some staff have involvement in developing and evaluating specific curriculum areas. For example, the literacy team is reviewing literacy across the school to evaluate the impact of changes in the subject.

The principal recognizes that the school is in a time of change; she and the administration team are leading the school by example, demonstrating flexibility, adaptability and a commitment to change.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>School Name: Public School 120 (PS 120)</b>	∅	✓	+
<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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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	