



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Marie Curie Middle School

**Middle School 158
46 – 35 Oceania Street
Queens
NY 11361**

Principal: Marie Nappi

Dates of review: November 27 - 29, 2006

Reviewer: Alan Geller

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Marie Curie Middle School 158 serves 1150 students in grades 6 to 8. Approximately 6% are special education students, with one full time collaborative team teaching class, and two classes of hearing impaired students who are a part of District 75. Eight percent of the students are English language learners. Fifty two percent of the students are Asian, 21% are White, 16% are Hispanic and 11% are Black. The attendance is over 96% and is higher than similar schools. This school is not eligible for Title 1 funding.

In September 2005 a new Principal was appointed. The curriculum is challenging with an emphasis on projects, reports and hands on activities. There is a School Enrichment model that focuses on the interests of students and utilizes thought provoking questions to solve problems.

Students in grade 6 take 2 special classes in the arts and then select a specialty area for grades 7 & 8. All students participate in computer technology, art, music and dance. Acceleration classes for grade 8 students are offered in science, mathematics and English as a second language. Approximately 25% of the graduating class are accepted and attend the specialized high schools. There is one magnet class in each grade, and a special progress program includes grade 7 & 8 students. After school programs provided by the Beacon and TASC, which are community based organizations partner with the school and provide intervention and enrichment activities for all students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has the respect of the teachers, students and parents and supports high expectations for all within a supportive, friendly, and safe learning environment.
- There is a collaborative team approach whereby teachers and administrators share in formulating decisions about the instructional program.
- Newly selected staff take part in a rigorous selection process, and are chosen by a school committee.
- School wide committees and teams meet on a regular basis to collaboratively formulate programs to meet the needs of all students.
- The school conducts the regular analysis of the available data to be utilized by all staff to provide instruction that addresses the needs of all students.
- It provides a specialized Talent, Fine and Performing Arts Program that develops the abilities and skills of all students.
- A high percentage of students graduate into the specialized high schools.
- There is a supportive school climate that encourages students to be successful and where open lines of communication between students and teachers encourage a very high rate of attendance.
- The budgeting plan is carefully designed to provide each student with the learning materials that promote opportunities to activate different learning styles.
- Youth development programs, in partnership with community based organizations, provide effective enrichment and intervention activities.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to provide professional development opportunities to develop the workshop model approach to teaching and learning.
- Provide training opportunities for staff to further differentiate instruction for all students.
- Further develop the gathering and analysis of data to maximize teacher planning to improve student outcomes.
- Develop systems to further ensure that students in grade 8 continue to improve in mathematics.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

The school is capably led by the principal who was assigned just over a year ago. She hired a new assistant principal for mathematics and science and changed the assignments of the three existing assistant principals so that each one would supervise their area of greatest strength. The cabinet, which consists of the school leaders, works well together. They collaborate on all issues and seek creative solutions where they are required. The school analyzes data and has made the teaching staff aware of its uses. It now differentiates instruction based upon these findings and is seeking to make this match to need even more accurate. In addition, the school has commenced generating their own data from curriculum based assessments as well as formulating decisions based upon regional and City tests.

The principal has focused on creating a school culture whereby the students, teachers and parents feel respected and know that there is someone to listen to their ideas. Students participate in high quality arts programs, intervention programs both during and before and after school sessions. These engage students and they feel respected. Students feel that they can communicate with their teachers as well as the principal. Parents also feel that the principal takes an interest in their opinions and they like the direction that the school is moving in.

The cabinet is committed to hiring an excellent staff and provides first rate training for new staff. The areas of improvement noted in this report are issues that the school is aware of and has begun to address them. Teachers and administrators are working together collaboratively on these issues.

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 well developed.

The school collects data from a variety of assessments and analyzes this information to determine areas of strength and weakness in all the students. Teachers have access to the Princeton Review as well as NY Start results and use this information to differentiate the planning of tasks to meet the needs of the students. Diagnostic tests are conducted regularly to assess student needs and lessons are planned accordingly. These issues are a main focus of professional development, which is held either in common planning time or in department and faculty meetings. Teachers utilize this time to discuss solutions to issues and to discover what works in terms of developing positive student outcomes. Administrators and teachers discuss the data produced by standardized exam scores, scale scores, regional exam data such as the Princeton Review as well as quizzes and unit tests to plan teaching programs. Every teacher has a good understanding of how each child is performing and the intervention programs that are needed.

The school compares its performance with other schools and has analyzed the scores of every child in both reading and mathematics to identify gains. Class scores as well as grade scores have also been evaluated and have been compared with previous years. Teachers have explored the uses of differentiating instruction based upon this information. New programs such as the Wilson, Achieving Maximum Potential program and Communication Arts Program have been adopted for high risk students. Supervisors and teachers review teacher made tests to note the rigor and to make them more challenging. Benchmarks for writing have been established and are utilized to analyze student writing samples. Detailed records are maintained to track improvement.

Careful analysis of the data revealed that the performance of students in English language arts went down slightly in 2006, although scores were higher than most similar schools scores in mathematics for grade 8 students also went down slightly and as a result the new mathematics assistant principal has focused his training efforts on reversing this trend. The school has also focused its attention on the progress of special education students by closely tracking each child's learning plan and the materials used to meet their needs. The progress of English language learners is also a key focus of the Comprehensive Education Plan. The school carefully tracks trends in performance by gender and ethnicity and takes appropriate action when key differences are identified.

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 well developed.

The school leaders, faculty and parents begin the goal setting process by writing the Comprehensive Educational Plan which reflects the school's efforts to set and reach their goals. The school is structured into departments and also into teaching teams of four who meet weekly with a supervisor to plan the curriculum and measure the impact of teaching and learning. Care is taken to ensure that all vulnerable students are discussed at regular meetings and that their progress is reviewed to ensure that their needs are being met.

Project based learning with specified writing activities is an integral part of each classroom. Supervisors enlist teaching staff to provide training to enable teachers to improve their planning to meet the needs of those in greatest need. Higher level thinking questions are a part of lesson planning, which helps to focus the attention of students. A school calendar of lessons with a timeline is being developed to focus all staff. Specific literature programs have been introduced to provide intervention strategies for students at risk. Student progress is tracked and academic support is provided on a timely basis.

The school sets high expectations for all students. Parents are an integral part of the program and work closely with teachers. Students are aware of these expectations and accept these challenges. The lines of communication are open for staff, students and parents and the school is appreciated for this open accessibility.

Special education students are closely monitored and are afforded the same program choices as all students. The supervisor of this program looks at measurable goals with the teachers and continually adjusts plan. The School Enrichment Model channels student interests to learn a subject while creating, in one instance, a theme based game board.

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.

This school works collaboratively to ensure that the curriculum is aligned. School based scheduling provides teachers with the opportunities to meet during a common planning time with their team members to discuss plans to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum. Another benefit of scheduling is that students take part in a daily arts program, which they have selected and is skills driven. Budgeting decisions are based on the needs of the school as identified by a careful analysis of data. Teams of teachers are created so that staff receive the necessary support and resources. These teams know their students both academically and emotionally and, as a result, are able to plan collaboratively to improve instruction and to determine their professional development needs. Teachers are held accountable by the principal for the students in their charge.

Instructional programs provide a challenge for students and project based learning engages students to think about the creation of their work. Students are engaged in most classrooms and good opportunities to work in groups and individually are provided. Students are respected as teachers expect a higher quality of work and students return this respect by working hard. Good communication exists between teachers and students and issues are handled quickly and effectively. Guidance counselors are also available to listen to students as are all school personnel. This positive culture is promoted by the principal, who respects both students and staff and has established a supportive learning environment. All students are supported by instructional programs that meet their needs such as the Wilson.

Peer tutoring is provided and develops strong social skills. A peer mediation program, supervised by teachers with student mediators provides a means to settle issues in a peaceful way. School attendance is maintained at a high level due in part to the high regard students have for the school. Lateness procedures are in place and working. The school is set up so that teams of teachers and administrators can meet to discuss issues related to professional development. Teachers are involved in peer and self evaluation as they observe demonstration lessons to note ways of improving methodologies to improve student outcomes.

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 well developed.

The principal is respected by all school constituencies, students, staff and parents. Students feel welcomed and respected which is a guiding principle of the new administration at the school. Parents like the new direction of the school and teachers feel that they are well supported and made to feel that they are an integral part of the school culture. The Principal is focused on developing the whole child which accounts for the social, emotional and academic needs of the children. New staff are only hired after a rigorous selection process. Candidates must have a strong knowledge base, and must fit in with the school's ethos by supporting children and helping them to grow into independent young adults. Newly hired staff were interviewed by a committee and had to take part in a three stage process before being selected. They are well supported by

school leaders and lead teachers as well as by a mentor. Professional development decisions are based upon the student needs that arise from both the analysis of formal and informal data. Decisions about improving programs are collaboratively made utilizing the team approach structure as well as the school leadership team. The principal frequently observes both formally and informally and is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of staff. Feedback is often provided and the principal's cabinet discusses these issues to seek professional training solutions.

The school is well organized and the overall tone of the building at all times of the day is conducive to a learning environment. Plans are carefully developed prior to all activities and many changes to ensure safety have been instituted. Staff reflect upon these changes which are upgraded if necessary. The school has after school partnerships with community based organizations which support students with enrichment and intervention activities as well as being a safe and friendly place to spend time before going home

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 school utilizes diagnostic assessments to focus on the initial needs of students. Team meetings are used to reveal if these assessment goals are being met. School based exams are reviewed regularly to improve the test making skills of staff. Interim assessments are conducted but are these are not always planned systematically and do not always allow the school to accurately record the achievement of curricular targets at specific time intervals.

Data is utilized on a regular basis as school leaders and teaching teams look at their students and record their progress. This allows staff to alter teaching plans to meet the needs of students and classes within a team and across the school. Comparative information is shared with all teams by the school leaders. The school conducts summative and formative assessments to check student progress. This enables the school to assign students to programs that will accelerate the learning of those most in need as well as to enrich activities for all students. The Comprehensive Education Plan is used as a guideline to note if the final outcomes are achieved. The school identifies measures to note the level of goal attainment and adjusts activities according to the resources available to improve student performance. The team approach allows staff to provide support in providing individual help.

A strength of the school are the assistant principals who are closely involved with monitoring goal achievement both by informally and informally observing the instructional program and providing professional development based upon the needs of staff. Planning of activities to accelerate learning is carried out regularly. The staff commitment to learning allows change to take place.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Marie Curie Junior High School (JHS 158)	∅	✓	+
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	