



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Oakland Gardens School**

**Public School 203**

**53 – 11 Springfield Boulevard  
Queens  
NY 11364**

**Principal: Carole K Nussbaum**

**Dates of review: November 28 – 29, 2006**

**Reviewer: Terry Brown**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Oakland Gardens School has 740 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5, 23 of whom are special education students and 92 are English language learners. Eighty two percent of the students enrolled are Asian, 13% White, 3% Hispanic and 2% Black. The 7.5% recent immigrants are mainly from South Korea, China and Hong Kong. Attendance at almost 96% is above that of similar schools and well above schools City-wide. Stability is also high, and suspension is very unusual. The school is not eligible for Title 1 funding.

The school has received a number of grants for specific initiatives and offers a large range of special programs, which together offer substantial enrichment. Music and drama play a large part in this.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Every member of the school community has high expectations of themselves and of others, from the youngest student to the principal.
- Data and all other relevant information is gathered, disseminated and used to plan and review interventions on a frequent and consistent basis.
- Staff are selected for their devotion to children and their all-round development.
- Staff are appropriately placed, participate in a wide range of professional development opportunities, then implement, share and review their learning and the impact on students.
- Lessons are consistently well structured.
- Students are fully engaged and enjoy their learning as their academic and personal development is being constantly enriched.
- Decisions about individual students, classes and whole school issues are made on a collaborative basis, with all relevant staff.
- Differentiation occurs in a sophisticated fashion with data being used effectively to organize the teaching of classes, groups and individuals using a variety of structured approaches.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the comprehensive rigor currently apparent in the school is applied to planning to ensure that improvement continues at the same high level following any future changes in the administration.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well developed school.**

This is a well developed school that successfully provides a nurturing and stimulating environment in which its students can flourish. Relentless attention to both the whole-school aspects and to the detail ensures that this occurs. All doors are literally open, an indication of how the school operates, and every interaction between adults and students is taken as an opportunity for positive development or reinforcement. Everyone is fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in pursuing the highest of expectations. Students are very happy in the school and enjoy, and apply themselves to, learning for its own sake.

All available data is used to inform the instruction of students to ensure that they achieve as much as they can in the time they are there. The school vision is known and applied by all its members. The school is a multicultural child-centered community of continuous and rigorous academic learning. Curriculum and instructional strategies are differentiated in all disciplines to maximize success for students.

### 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 makes excellent use of all available standardized and criterion referenced test result data, and generates some of its own. This data is used to organize classes in order to maintain progress for all students and to raise expectations at every opportunity. This includes both the homogeneous and special education classes in each grade.

Every student with a 2 or 1 score on the class report card analysis is considered at regular collaborative pupil personnel team meetings. They are then given extra appropriate support with assigned personnel, taking into account views and observations of all the staff involved with that student. As part of these meetings, class performance is also analyzed. Special consideration is given to English language learners, ethnic groups, high achievers in the homogeneous classes, and possible hold-over students, although all students' performance and progress are monitored using individual assessment folders which teachers update on a frequent, often daily basis.

The annual school report is used for longitudinal and similar and all City school comparison. This usually occurs after, and reinforces the perception gained by, the school's own data collection.

The comprehensive, rigorous, and frequent approach to data collection ensures that each student receives instruction at his or her own level, which together with the high expectations and caring culture of the school has a positive effect on student achievement.

**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.**

Data and other relevant information are collected on every student, group and class by teachers, all support staff, and by the principal and assistant principal. The administrators supplement this information by walking the school frequently and informally engaging directly with the students and staff.

Weekly grade meetings and frequent pupil personnel team meetings set goals and timeframes for individual students, groups and classes. While every student is considered in this process, specific attention is given to those students most in need of academic support, and those who bring other issues to school, for example students who experience bereavement. Collaborative decisions are taken about immediate interventions by the appropriate support staff in order to elicit the likely cause of limited achievement and to take remedial action.

Consequently, every member of the school, from the youngest student to the principal, including parents and, for example, the custodian, has high expectations about every aspect of school life. This is relentlessly reinforced in a respectful, assertive and caring manner.

The ‘open-door’, proactive approach by the principal, assistant principal and other staff is reinforced by formal arrangements for parent teacher meetings. These are usually attended by the students who have learnt to be very aware of their strengths and weaknesses and what they and others can do to maintain and encourage progress.

**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 is exempt from the mandated curriculum although it has minimal funding. This gives freedom for curriculum design, but restrictions as to what resources are available, with the consequence that only the lowest-achieving students are able to be supported. Performance data is gathered by the teachers in the student assessment folders and analysed and considered frequently and consistently across the school, alongside information from support and other staff.

Teachers and other staff are delegated the responsibility and accountability for improving instruction and for student outcomes, within the high expectation and collaboratively supportive culture of the school. Teachers use a wide range of differentiated structures and techniques for instruction, including guided reading in ability groups, the ‘Independent Investigation Method’, and high-level questioning. Students therefore learn at their own level and progress quickly. Differentiation occurs through curriculum design, direct instruction and by student outcome on set tasks.

The budget and other resources are carefully managed, always with the best interests of students in mind. The limited support available for low-achieving students is efficiently

organized to ensure the greatest impact. All staff are allocated to grades, specific curriculum areas, and support work according to both the needs of the student population and their own observed strengths.

Students are actively engaged in lessons, report that learning is fun, and very clearly want to do their best on every occasion. Attendance is not an issue, although every absence triggers immediate communication with parents. They and their children are keen to ensure that they catch up with work and homework missed through absence. Students also benefit greatly from the large range of enrichment activities, both during and outside the school day.

All staff know the students they are responsible for very well, and respond to them appropriately on every level. Students are very open to staff about all issues and know who they can talk with if they have a concern of any kind. Students consequently pursue acceleration of their own learning as a matter of course.

**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.**

Teachers apply for positions in this school because they want to work in this caring, collaborative and rigorous environment, and to continue to learn and develop their skills. They are selected for their devotion to children and learning, their high level of professionalism in dealing with students and with the sophisticated parent group, their resilience and sense of humor.

The curriculum and professional development are data driven. All staff are offered substantial opportunities to participate in curriculum selection and design; and implement, share and review new techniques thoroughly.

Collaborative grade meetings and peer coaching are supplemented by frequent informal classroom visits by the principal and assistant principal. Senior managers undertake regular formal observations using a template and include pre- and post-observation discussions for focus and reflection.

The commitment of the principal to the school, the staff, students and parents produces reciprocal respect and application to the pursuit of high expectations. Developments are only implemented if they will benefit the students, and are considered in depth, agreed on collaboratively, piloted and the impact reviewed before whole school delivery occurs.

Every member of the school is clear about their responsibilities and the procedures in a range of situations, is comfortable to ask, and may be sensitively and assertively informed, if they are unaware.

All support services are aligned to the high expectations inherent in the school, and extra resources sought to enrich all aspects of the school, in particular by the very proactive parent coordinator.

As a result of all the above the students benefit from an environment and adult interaction which constantly nurtures their academic and social development.

**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 well developed.**

The school is characterized by its continuous attempts to implement the most effective ways of accelerating the students' learning.

Assessments of individual, group, class, grade and whole school progress inform revision of plans and goals and teaching practices. This is an ongoing feature of the school, which occurs continuously on an informal basis and regularly through formal channels.

Each member of the school, including students, is aware of the long- and short-term goals and plans relevant to them, and the immediate and medium-term actions to be taken to pursue them. As events and information change the situation, all these are adapted to pursue the end result. The administration develops the Comprehensive Education Plan, with appropriate consultation with a wide range of groups, and the means of achieving the goals are delegated to the staff, who in turn share the responsibility with the students for progress.

The result of all this for the students is an almost instinctive love of learning and doing their best, which is very clearly reflected in the high achievement of the school in external comparisons.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Oakland Gardens School [PS 203]</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

- 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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<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