



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Elizabeth Blackwell

Middle School 210

93-11 101 Avenue

Queens

NY 11416

Principal: Rosalyn Allman-Manning

Dates of review: May 14 - 15, 2007

**Reviewer: Thomas J. Clark, with Kath Wood and
Richard Woolf**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Elizabeth Blackwell Middle School, located in the Ozone Park section of Queens, serves a diverse population of approximately 2200 students in grades 6 through 8, making it one of the largest middle schools in the city. Over 40 languages are spoken in the school's community, including Spanish, Bengali, Urdu, Punjab, Chinese and Haitian Creole. The school has growing populations of Hispanic (61%) and Asian (27%) students, which are both larger than similar schools, and declining numbers of Black (7%) and White (5%) students, which are both smaller than in similar schools. Approximately 290 students (13%) receive special education services and 230 (11%) are English language learners.

Sixty-seven percent of the school's students are Title 1 eligible, which is comparable to similar schools. The school's attendance rate (92%) is also comparable to similar schools. In spite of its large size, the school offers a safe and orderly learning environment for the students and staff.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is led well by an energetic principal supported by a professional staff of caring teachers and administrators.
- Teachers are held accountable to provide instruction that results in student progress over time.
- All teachers are observed frequently by the administrators, who provide timely feedback found useful by the teachers to improve instruction.
- The school's focus on improving attendance impacts achievement.
- Through continuous review of student data the school identifies students who need additional support and provides it for them.
- The students have respect for the teachers, the administrators and each other.
- The school leadership team uses data effectively to define goals and to monitor the school's progress toward achieving those goals.
- As a result of frequent use of data to assess need, the school offers an effective staff development program for teachers.
- Despite its large size, the school provides a safe haven for its students and staff.
- The school works hard at displaying quality student work in the hallways and classrooms.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue the expansion of differentiated instruction into all classrooms.
- Explore ways to increase parental involvement in the school.
- Continue to expand the use of the Developmental Reading Assessment as a tool to monitor student progress across the grades.
- Find ways to include student involvement in the school's goal setting activities.
- Develop unified assessments in science and social studies to facilitate monitoring of student progress toward the State standards.
- Continue to increase the capacity of teachers to maintain and use conference notes in assessing student need and tracking their progress.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

Elizabeth Blackwell Middle School provides a safe and nurturing learning environment for its very large student population. The principal of two years has brought a feeling of family to the school, emphasizing the importance of establishing positive relationships among all members of the school community, which she models daily. Teachers and administrators feel accountable and have high expectations for all of the students, seeking the best way to support each of them in achieving their full potential. The teachers are also very supportive of each other, which is most important given the large number of new and inexperienced teachers on the faculty.

Administrators and teachers use data effectively to assess student need and to monitor the impact of instruction. Professional development occurs on going, providing effective support to the teachers in implementing new curriculum and concurrent instructional strategies. Weekly study groups during lunches, preparation periods and after school offer an effective vehicle for providing staff development time. Alignment of the school's curriculum with the State standards and assessments by the school's coaches and administrators was instrumental in improving State assessment scores in 2006.

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 school obtains and analyzes data from a variety of formal and informal sources, including websites for the respective City and State assessments. Since this data was not available at the beginning of the school year, and because an item analysis is no longer available, the school worked with the region to develop an assessment in English language arts and mathematics that enabled teachers to determine early on in the school year individual student, classroom and grade-level strengths and weaknesses to be used in planning for instruction. Other informal assessments included in-house assessments in English language arts and mathematics from which "hot lists" were developed which identified individual sub-skill deficiencies to be used in planning differentiated instruction. Such unified assessments are a work in progress in science and social studies.

The school disaggregates student data to detect any possible differences in performance of the school's ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students and boys and girls. Analyses of these data revealed differences between boys and girls in all areas, prompting the school to alter its focus to more carefully monitor the work of boys. Teachers maintain student data folios with individual student results from the various assessments, with teacher developed "hot lists" of skills needing development. The folios are better developed in English language arts and mathematics than in science and social studies. Student folios also contain teacher conference notes to inform instruction based on the one-on-one sessions. The conference notes are not yet consistently kept across the

school. The Developmental Reading Assessment, brought in with the America's Choice program, is used effectively by 6th grade teachers, but is still in the implementation stage in the upper grades.

The administration and school leadership team monitor the school's progress during their weekly and monthly meetings respectively. Comparisons are made across classes and grades to detect trends over the year and with past year's results. Similar schools data are compared when available.

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.

The Comprehensive Educational Plan is developed by the school leadership team through a collaborative process involving parents, teachers and administrators. This team meets monthly to monitor the school's progress, making any mid-course corrections required. The team has adapted a school review process to do an annual assessment of the status of a critical element of the school plan through classroom visitations. A recent review revealed the need for more support for teachers in maintaining their student folios.

Teachers maintain student folios which contain "hot lists" and skill sheets identifying individual student skills needs used to set monthly goals for students and to form groups in English language arts and mathematics. Weekly meetings of the academic intervention team review data for students requiring additional support. Interventions to support these students are monitored for their effect in helping students succeed. The school provides special attention and support to students retained more than once in grade 7, referred to as holdovers. Students performing at level one on the State assessments are provided additional support, including after-school and Saturday programs.

The school frequently recognizes and celebrates student achievements to reinforce the staff's high expectations. The parent coordinator offers many opportunities for parents to obtain information and provide input on their child's education. To date the school is still struggling to get what it considers adequate parent participation. Students are not involved in the planning process, which is an area in need of development.

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.

Many supports are provided to the teachers to help them implement the curriculum, including monthly writing prompts. The Kaplan testing strategies were also added. Read-alouds from the literacy block were implemented in science and social studies classes. The Impact Mathematics sequence was modified to focus instruction on key strands and a new pacing calendar developed to align the program with the State standards. Alignment of the school's science and social studies programs is planned.

Teachers are held accountable for implementing the school's curriculum and for the outcomes of their students through the frequent administrative observations and walkthroughs, along with the associated conferences. Differentiated instruction to meet individual student needs is present in many classrooms, but not all. The quality of student folios maintained to inform instruction is inconsistent across grades and subject areas.

The principal and other administrators use the school's budget creatively to support the teachers and the instructional program. Classrooms are well resourced, with teachers saying they only have to ask to get what they need. Involvement with America's Choice was continued with school funds when the comprehensive school reform funding ended. Additional instructional time is scheduled for students not making adequate progress, including a Saturday program. Support teachers are scheduled as push-ins to provide additional support for struggling students in classrooms. Small classes and computer programs are provided for beginner English language learners. A unique aspect of the school's scheduling is the afternoon and after school academy, which operates from 12:30 to 6:30, offering support for 8th graders with poor current attendance but good past academic performance. Talent classes and instruction are fit into the school's schedule to accommodate chorus, music and visual arts instruction.

Students are actively engaged in learning activities throughout the school. They appear focused and eager to learn. Student attendance is a school priority, with calls made to the homes of absent and late students. An attendance bulletin board posts the names of students with 100% attendance, with pizza parties and tickets for performances awarded to classes with 100% attendance.

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 and assistant principals thoroughly evaluate prospective teachers to determine if their pedagogical knowledge and skills, including their ability to use data to set high expectations for student performance, will bring added value to the school. The administrators don't just wait for candidates to come to them, but rather seek them out in places like teacher hiring fairs and the New York City Teaching Fellows program. Candidates meeting the initial rigorous criteria are invited to come to the school to do a demonstration lesson, and to bring a portfolio of lesson plans, special projects and student work they have evaluated.

Professional development is on going and designed to meet the needs of teachers to effectively implement the school's ambitious and challenging curriculum. Professional development activities include study groups, classroom inter-visitations, modeling by coaches, co-teaching and both internal and external workshops. Sessions are provided to ensure teachers are skilled in using the various sources of student data available to them to inform instruction. The impact of professional development on classroom instruction is monitored by the administrators and coaches. Collaborative study groups are an especially effective vehicle for professional development. Held multiple days during each week at various times during the school day, the sessions provide opportunities for planning and development work during lunch and preparation periods. After school sessions are also offered. New and inexperienced teachers find these sessions especially helpful. The school provides financial support for teachers to attend professional conferences as well.

The principal and assistant principals conduct observations and walkthroughs frequently, providing feedback which teachers find useful in reflecting on their instruction. The administrators know the strengths and areas for improvement of all the staff, and use that information to provide support where needed and to determine where there should be follow-up. The principal is highly respected by the parents, students and teachers, with one parent saying the principal acts as “the mother of all the children.” With the effective leadership provided by the administrators and the constant involvement of teachers and support staff, the school runs exceptionally well.

The school has strong ties to several community organizations that offer extensive youth development and support services for the students. The Cross Island YMCA Beacon Program provides after school activities, such as basketball leagues, martial arts and dance classes and classes in the creative and visual arts. St. John’s University offers Saturday motivational programs, and through the City Center Encores Program students participate in singing, dancing and acting activities that have curricular connections. Student art is frequently on public display, most recently in the State capitol. The school’s chorus will be performing in Carnegie Hall this year, and many of its singers have been selected for the all-city chorus.

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’s administrators effectively monitor progress in the implementation of the Comprehensive Education Plan goals. Instructional components of the plan are monitored in class visits, which are discussed during weekly cabinet meetings. Reports from study groups and administrator observations document progress made in developing instructional materials and assessments. Each assistant principal submits documentation of monitoring each month, with sign-off by the principal. Not all of the school’s goals are objectively measurable with definite timelines to facilitate monitoring.

Multiple forms of assessment are used to track individual student progress, as well as that for classes, grades and the entire school. Comparisons are made with grade level standards where available, as in the Developmental Reading Assessment levels. The results of in-house assessments, developed to assess student proficiency of skills tested on the State assessments, are used by the teachers to construct individual student skill profile sheets to track progress.

The progress of every class and grade is evaluated with several variables in English language arts and mathematics during the monthly cabinet meetings, and by the respective study groups. Data folios maintained by the teachers contain multiple student skills sheets and assessment reports detailing individual student progress during the school year. Frequent collection and analysis of data results in mid-course corrections that ensure the school’s continued improvement in its student outcomes.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Elizabeth Blackwell (MS 210)	∅	✓	+
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