



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

North Hills School

Public School 221

**57-40 Marathon Parkway
Queens
NY 11362**

Principal: Ms. Sheelia Twomey

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Reviewer: Margaret Lee

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school has an enrollment of approximately 660 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 5. There is a lower proportion of special education students than in other schools. Students are mostly in collaborative classes, with one kindergarten self contained class. Approximately 60% of students are Asian, 30% are White and 7% are Hispanic. There is a much lower proportion of English language learners than in schools across the City, although the proportion is close to that in similar schools. The proportion of students who have recently arrived within the country is similar to schools across the City. These students were mostly born in South Korea, with smaller numbers born in China and Canada. Attendance in 2005 was above 96%, which was higher than similar schools and schools across the City. The school does not receive Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is an educational leader who proactively guides staff to meet her high expectations and works successfully with the assistant principal.
- The school embraces all students with a caring and effective culture of student-centered learning and data driven instruction.
- Teachers are knowledgeable, highly-skilled and very supportive of each other in their approach to teaching and learning.
- Professional development directly involves the principal which ensures that teachers' meeting times are efficiently used to achieve professional learning as an inherent part of their practice.
- The students follow the routines of the school and classroom very well and are exceptionally well-focused and attentive in their work.
- The school building is well-maintained and attractive, with many welcoming and well-used bulletin boards.
- Teachers' classrooms have bright and stimulating displays that celebrate students' successes and present them with a rich variety of resource materials and learning prompts.
- Parents work extensively and collaboratively for the school and give generously of their time to support the programs on offer.
- Parents respect the teachers and school leaders.
- Special education students make good progress in both the self-contained kindergarten class and in the collaborative classes.

What the school needs to improve

- Document the cycle of current assessment processes clearly, along with any modifications of practice based on the assessment data, to make the processes graphically explicit and readily available.
- Increase the use of objective and measurable targets at interim stages throughout the school year.
- Increase formalized self and peer evaluation of school practices.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

The principal is an instructional leader who has consolidated good student-centered instruction practices throughout the school. The school is very effective and, despite the successes, the principal continues to consider areas for further improvement. She has developed the school as a place of educational success and nurturing. The school responds to the needs of the community through continued expansion of opportunities for children's learning. The school community is proud and supportive of the school. The school demonstrates high levels of cooperation, care and concern for all students.

The school collects student data and uses it to begin intervention early in the school year to ensure that any student having difficulty receives the maximum support. These practices are consistently used by the teachers who work well together. Teachers demonstrate high levels of instructional expertise. Their classrooms are well-resourced, with much celebration of students' work.

The school works in cooperation with the local branch library, which adjoins the school grounds, although the school has re-established its own library space and maintains a collection of materials for specific teaching purposes.

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.

Teachers make very good use of assessment and have adopted it as a fundamental part of their teaching. They routinely administer and use a wide range of informal and formal assessments. This includes diagnostic tests, commercial testing programs and teacher-driven assessments. Collaborative meetings help to ensure that the outcomes of teacher generated assessments are reliable and accurate. All teaching and learning decisions in the school are based upon the needs of students that have been identified through the detailed analysis of assessments and other data.

The school is very proactive in transferring all student records so that their progress can be tracked and monitored year over year by different teachers. Teachers have built progressively on each others' knowledge of the students and achievement has increased steadily since 2003 as a result. These evaluation practices are used effectively to identify and meet the needs of individual students, but have not been analyzed fully by ethnicity and gender. The school uses comparisons with similar and City schools when evaluating its own successes.

The data is gathered and analyzed for all grade levels in regular, ongoing cycles and teachers routinely discuss student progress. Student data is also examined and monitored by school leaders to ensure that continuous progress is being achieved. The response of

all teachers to their students' data is monitored carefully by the principal and assistant principal. This is, for example, through their presence at individual grade level teacher meetings, faculty meetings and in regular classroom visits.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan is produced collaboratively, with teachers and parents working together on each section. The formulation of the school's learning goals stems directly from classroom goals that are modified following regular monitoring of students' progress. There is insufficient use of objectively measurable goals at either the interim or annual timeframe, however. A clear record of the cycle of assessment, with modifications of practice based on this assessment data, is not available to make these processes explicit. Nevertheless, the Comprehensive Education Plan is continually referred to and continuously developed to improve practice within the school. All members of the school community are driven by the plans generated to sustain and improve student outcomes.

Good attention is paid to the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement. Student progress is monitored by all teachers and discussed in thoughtful ways at academic intervention meetings. Meetings are held in a relaxed manner, where open discussion generates solutions. The principal maintains thorough documentation of the progress of all underachieving students. She also reviews and reflects upon those students who have progressed beyond the point of being regularly included in teacher specific discussions.

Parents are actively engaged in working within the school. They have good ideas for the improvement of school practice and goals which they readily contribute to discussions. They attend executive board, parent teacher association and school leadership meetings. The school's high expectations are consistently communicated to parents, who appreciate the timeliness with which teachers let them know of any concerns that may arise.

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's coach works well to support developments and to ensure that all operational aspects of the curriculum are fully implemented. There is not complete documentation of the grade level curriculum goals as they relate to standards and the mandated curriculum, however. Teachers are motivated and supported well to achieve the very high expectations that are articulated by the principal. The positive and collaborative tone at meetings, with each teacher being able to contribute, achieves constructive improvements in the impact of instruction. Instructional practices and content are willingly modified by the teachers, based on the advice and modeling from the coach. The principal is also a driving force in the teaching and learning process. She contributes by giving model lessons, participating in teacher meetings and facilitating professional discussions between

teachers. The outcome is a learning organization that continually challenges itself with teachers learning from each other and adjusting practices and processes accordingly.

The school has recognized the importance of developing the whole child and has taken steps to increase the opportunities for study in the arts, with a full time music teacher being employed for example. The school also broadens the students' experiences through a range of extra-curricular activities. The wide variety of enrichment and extra-curricular activities supplement the core curriculum well.

The school's budget is allocated well to support classroom instruction and additional instructional support. It is also used effectively to provide a rich range of classroom resources and books. The well-resourced technology classroom provides access to computers for each child and teacher. All of these factors have led to an improvement in outcomes for students. This is particularly so in mathematics, where greater use is being made of problem solving skills.

The literacy coach works with the teachers to produce more varied instructional approaches. This has enabled teachers to ensure that they are directly teaching to the required standards in ways that interest and engage the students. Staff know and respect the students, enabling them to respond to their personal as well as their academic needs. Attendance is afforded a high priority, with effective systems ensuring that it remains high.

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 has successfully selected staff members based on their capacity to be good teachers for particular grade levels and to work well as part of a team. She purposefully chose to replace recent retirees with a range of staff members to bring a breadth of teaching experience to the school. Staff choose to work together in this supportive environment.

Professional development is planned on the basis of staff input and identified whole-school needs. It is conducted at times by the principal, staff members, or the coach. Each teacher's grade meeting and common preparation time is effectively used as a professional learning opportunity. The coach works enthusiastically to facilitate teachers' adoption of student-centered teaching and learning practices. The principal and assistant principal regularly visit classrooms throughout the school and have a good picture of the strengths and development areas across the team. The principal engages in an open dialogue with teachers and uses her observations to inform professional development and faculty meeting discussions. Teachers also make frequent classroom inter-visitations. There is, however, more limited use of self- and peer-evaluation of school practices.

The principal is highly respected, especially for her direct involvement and leadership in classroom practices. She has diligently improved teaching across the school so that it is now assessment-driven. The principal has a very good capacity to continue to effect change. The school operates peacefully and smoothly. It is well organized with clear procedures which are consistently followed. The transition from one program to another is responsibly managed by the students. The school has effective partnerships with external organizations, which are used to support its plans and goals.

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 review of data is well developed within the classroom. Teachers respond constructively to the data in changing their teaching practice. They are able to guide students to the next level as adjustments are made and where there are opportunities for improvement. The data is also monitored carefully by the principal and assistant principal through their presence in classrooms and at grade level and faculty meetings. This practice is a foundation of the teachers' daily work with students.

The principal has established collaborative processes at all levels of school decision making. The information from teachers' data analysis is used to formulate teaching plans and grade level teaching and learning goals. Objective and measurable information about the students' level of performance is not always referred to in specific detail in school goal setting meetings, however.

Collaborative processes exist in school leadership team meetings and with representative parents. The staff leadership team and faculty members all review progress towards goals. The school responds positively to identified needs and modifications are made to the curriculum, professional development content, and the school's goals to effectively address the issues. However, not all members of the school community, including some teachers, necessarily understand the connections between all of these areas.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: North Hills School (PS 221)	∅	✓	+
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