



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Susan B. Anthony Academy Middle School

Middle School 238

88 - 15 182 Street

Hollis

New York

NY 11423

Principal: Joseph Gates

Dates of review: May 3 – 8, 2007

Reviewer: Chrissie Pittman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Susan B. Anthony Academy Middle School serves 1431 students from grades 6 through 8 in three academies. These are the Academy of communicative arts, Academy of law and the Academy of Medical Sciences.

The school population comprises of 47% Black students, 26% Hispanic, 26% Asian and with a very small percentage (1%) of White students. The percentage of special education students (4.3%) is lower than similar and City schools but the proportion of English language learners (12.3%) are higher than found in similar and City schools. Sixty six percent of students are eligible for Title 1 funding, which is higher than both similar and city schools. Attendance levels at 91% have improved and are now in line with similar schools and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a high profile throughout the school and is well respected by parents, staff and pupils alike.
- Students', who score in the lowest third citywide, have significantly improved their achievement in English language arts and mathematics in the last two years.
- Teachers have high expectations for the students and make the learning enjoyable so that students stay engaged during lessons.
- There are excellent examples of collaboration between the teachers to identify and share good practice and to monitor the impact on student progress.
- The school has very good assessment procedures.
- Comprehensive administrative systems have been established to effectively collect data in order to promote student progress.
- Excellent relationships, with a wide range of external services, significantly enhance the education provided by the school
- Students know and trust the teachers and say there is a good family relationship throughout the school.
- Professional development is very good and increases staff confidence and competence to use data more effectively to improve student outcomes
- Positive strategies are in place throughout the school to encourage and reward good attendance

Areas for Improvement

- Improve the analysis and monitoring of data in relation to ethnicity and gender.
- Develop the comparative analysis of performance within and between the respective academies.
- Strategic planning needs to be improved over a longer term so that it can be used proactively rather than reactively.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

The principal took over the school just over three years ago, and in that time he has turned around its development and progress. There has been a fundamental shift in expectations and the percentage of lower achievers has been substantially reduced. Students who were performing in the lowest third Citywide, English language learners and special education students are now achieving significantly better results. The principal has also established a secure basis for the school's continuing development in terms of computer technology and the collection of data. Performance in writing and reading is also improving from a very low starting point. Students are engaged and involved with their learning. Much of this is due to the highly effective assessment and data analysis procedures that have been implemented. The principal has effectively created a safe and positive learning environment. This is reflected in the very good relationships between the staff, students and parents.

Staff are very supportive of each other and flexible in their attitudes to change. The improving attendance figures are an indicator of the support parents are giving the school. Staff, parents and students all speak highly about the changes and opportunities which are now afforded to them. Given the evident commitment of the principal and staff, the school has very good capacity to become fully developed. However, the strategic plan is not focused enough on how the school is to be held accountable and data is interpreted to build even further on its current achievements.

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 has very effective systems for collecting and collating data from external sources at student, class and grade level. The principal has put in place some successful procedures for analyzing and using the data to help improve student achievement. For example, every student has a portfolio with annotated work and a record of achievement.

Teachers have assessment folders linked to these profiles. This is to ensure that areas and levels of study are closely linked to students' abilities. Their progress is then tracked and intervention and support strategies put into place if they are not making the expected progress. All students are tested when they first arrive at the school in English language arts and mathematics. Their progress is then periodically re-evaluated through Princeton reviews and teacher generated tests in all subjects. This is particularly relevant to special education students and English language learners to make sure that any enrichment programs are closely aligned to their academic needs. This thorough data analysis has enabled the principal to identify several underachieving students, who have now benefited from additional English language arts and mathematics instruction. The baseline data collated for all groups of students is particularly detailed and comprehensive. For example

the school identifies and targets the progress of identified groups such as pupils new to the school very effectively, with programs such as Kaplan, Wilson and Read 180. The school proficiently uses external data to compare its performance with past cohorts and similar schools. However the analysis of data in relation to gender and ethnicity is not as rigorous. Attendance data shows an improving trend. However, comparative analysis of performance within and between the respective academies is not sufficiently developed.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through correction improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Data is used successfully to plan and set both immediate and long-term goals, although the Comprehensive Education Plan in its present form has limited use as a tool for strategic planning. The school has a number of contexts where collaborative meetings to promote planning for short-term and long-term goals occur, for example improving literacy skills. An implementation strategy was devised which effectively identified short- and long-term goals within a specified time frame to improve the performance of new students who were achieving at level 1 and 2. This was done very successfully through hiring a well-qualified teacher and providing the students with suitable programs such as Wilson and Read 180. Each member of staff has an assessment binder which itemizes the performance information for each student in their class. It includes information from the test scores and an item analysis for each student. The administration regularly disseminates ongoing information gained from assessments and tests which provide teachers with up-to-date data on the performance and progress of students at class and grade level.

There is a good focus on the data produced for English language learners and special education students. The school is very inclusive and caters well for these groups. A range of intervention programs and detailed individual education plans ensure these students are well supported and make good progress. For example last year special education students were commended for making a year and a half’s progress in the school’s progress report. The principal has communicated his high expectations to students and staff. Students say their expectations of themselves have been raised. Many of the parents are delighted with the progress their children are now making. Teachers identify clear learning objectives and encourage students to evaluate how well they are meeting their targets. The school finds creative systems to fully involve students and their parents in setting goals and targets. The school’s high expectations have resulted in students becoming more interested in the courses and taking advantage of the additional classes that are being run resulting in the fact that the proportion of students achieving at the lower levels has gone down significantly.

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 selects the curriculum on how well it aligns with the mandated curriculum, and also on how well it supports the themes of the various Academies, the school’s expectations and improvement plans. For example, to address the preponderance of

Level 1 achievement the principal extended the school day and started a Saturday Academy for the new students who were underachieving. Staff, are committed to the development of the school and make sure that instructional programs are geared to producing data. They analyze the data well to record progress and plan for improvement and student outcomes. All staff can clearly explain why data driven decisions, leading to agreed school procedures, have been made. Teachers plan differentiated lessons very effectively in grade level teams that are securely based on what students know, understand and can do. This is accepted practice at the school. As a result, lessons are interesting and actively engage students as in the eighth grade where some students were thoroughly enjoying themselves reconstructing the Berlin Wall. Much of the teaching is done through project-based learning and assessment data is used very effectively to adapt the teaching programs. For example, students studying basic English are given the task of looking at the author's purpose to develop their higher order thinking skills.

The budget is used very well to effectively promote the school's objectives and clearly in impact on student progress. Strategic decisions about the allocation of financial resources and staffing led to the effective restructuring of the academic support program. Scheduling decisions are also guided by the needs that emerge from the data and the school's plan to improve student outcomes. For example, every teacher has a common prep and time is set aside for visiting other classes. Effective staffing decisions are demonstrated by the hiring of an additional reading specialist to allow students with the greatest need to have literacy training at their own level. Staff know and respect students and respond to their personal as well as academic needs. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff and feels they can go to them, if the need arises. Relationships between all adults and students are excellent. Attendance has high-priority for the school. The principal examines attendance rosters daily and, in the case of absence, parents are telephoned immediately. Positive strategies are in place throughout the school to encourage and reward good 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.

Staff are chosen first on their ability to use data, then on the basis that they care about the students, have good qualifications, are good practitioners, can work collaboratively and are committed to student progress.

The principal has a high profile in the school and an excellent capacity to effect change. Parents attribute the principal's success to his clear focus and commitment to the interests of the students. He has inspired the staff, raised morale and provided a shared vision to move the school forward. More importantly, he has significantly improved achievement for students with the greatest need and provided the others with the aspiration to succeed. Student behavior is significantly better, because there is a shared commitment between teachers and students to do well. This commitment is centered on the need to work in collaborative teams to share the good practice that is identified through regular formal and informal observations of teaching and learning and through a better awareness of how to use data, to improve instruction.

Teachers are eager to improve their skills and readily involve themselves in professional development. The outcome is to allow teachers to work collaboratively and to provide feedback to each other. Staff development activities are effectively raising the overall level

of competence in the school. The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. He is well supported by his administrative team and the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The partnership with external agencies works well for the support of students who are in need of some form of intervention strategy such as Kaplan. The MetLife foundation provides funds for the school's very successful sports and arts program.

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's monitoring and review processes are still evolving although it has systematically analyzed its data to benchmark progress. Classroom teachers are self critical and happy to take advice. The school's review of how it compares to other schools and how classes compare to each other is a useful tool in this respect. The assessment binder which is compiled by each teacher is an effective mechanism for making interim evaluations of students' progress and an indicator for appropriate intervention strategies. For example, teachers have an excellent well evidenced understanding of students strengths and weaknesses with a clear knowledge of what needs to be improved. A full evaluation of students goals are undertaken every five weeks to see if they are making the necessary progress.

Reviews and monitoring of teaching in classes has been very effectively completed by the principal. This has been a necessary step in the initial stages of the school's redevelopment to establish clear expectations and common approaches. However, given the current stage of development there is insufficient use of senior leaders in the review and monitoring process. There needs to be more of a shared approach to a summative evaluation of longer term goals. Strategic planning is too short-term and does not have clear measurable targets for long-term improvement. However students are robustly monitored on an individual basis. When there is any cause for concern it is picked up by the teaching staff who carry out regular progress checks on the work produced in the classrooms. The outcomes of one plan drives the goal setting of the next and the school is constantly realigning its practices and resources to improve student performance.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Susan B. Anthony Academy Middle School [IS238]	∅	✓	+
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	