



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Maurice Wollin School

Public School 4

**200 Nedra Lane
Staten Island
NY 10312**

Principal: Mr. Marc A. Harris

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Reviewer: Deidre R. Farmbry

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Maurice Wollin School, Public School 4, is located on Staten Island. It has approximately 762 students in grades pre kindergarten through five. Eighty-eight are special education students, including students who are in a program for a particular form of autism. A relatively low number of eighteen students are English language learners. The majority of the student population is White at 80%. Hispanic students comprise 11%, Asians comprise 7%, and Blacks comprise 2%. The school is not eligible to receive funds through Title I. Attendance has been slightly below that seen in similar schools and above City schools in recent years, but has recently improved as a result of the school's emphasis on this area of its work. The school has an active parents' association that has successfully raised funds to provide various enrichment activities for students.

The school has had the same principal for 15 years and stable staffing. In the past four years, this pattern has changed and, following retirements, several new teachers have joined the staff. The school recently made a transition from homogeneous to heterogeneous student groupings to enable teachers to meet the needs of students of varying achievement levels in the same classroom.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Using a variety of formal and informal assessments, the school effectively collects, analyses, and uses data to guide decisions relative to student achievement.
- Curricular content is uniform across classrooms of the same grade level, with topics carefully coordinated and displayed on curriculum maps designed to guide classroom practice.
- The school has been active in securing ways to enrich its curriculum which has had a positive impact on students' motivation
- The use of rubrics, notes, and teacher-to-student conferencing promotes clarity for students regarding their individual progress, particularly in writing.
- The principal's leadership style has promoted a strong sense of teamwork throughout the school.
- Professional development is a strong feature in the school's development because it is targeted to address needs articulated by staff and confirmed by data.
- Parent workshops are successful in familiarizing parents with the curriculum so that they can better assist their children with homework and other academic projects.
- The school has very high expectations for student achievement and student behavior which are reinforced well by teachers and other adults.
- Staff members, from administrators to support staff, are deployed effectively and given the professional guidance to provide service and assistance as needed.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop teachers' confidence in differentiating instruction, particularly in the challenge provided for higher-attaining students.
- Improve the comparative analysis of the progress made by groups of students, including by ethnic groups and by boys and girls.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

The Maurice Wollin School is a successful school that successfully promotes high student achievement. The school is following all curriculum mandates and has mapped the scope and sequence for course content for each grade. It uses data well to make strategic decisions relative to instructional programming as well as student interventions. The administrative team is well respected and deemed to be effective by students, staff and parents. The collaboration within the school and between home and school is excellent. This insures that plans designed to improve student achievement are well coordinated and have a strong potential to yield planned outcomes.

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 uses data provided in City and State test reports, as well as data from unit tests, Princeton Review, and various other formative assessment measures to effectively document and guide students' progress. Portfolios are used to collect student work for on-going analysis, and are well used in guiding discussion and planning at administrative team and teacher grade group meetings. Data is readily accessible, so that senior staff and teachers are able to use the information easily when, for example, looking at students' comparative performance in different strands of writing. Although the school regards assessments from conference notes and in-class assessments as informal, good use is made of this and externally published information in identifying the progress made by individual students across classes, grades and, to a slightly lesser extent, subjects.

Staff are skilled in analyzing data and planning activities according to what this information tells them about students' needs. Good use is made of information about the achievement of special education students and the comparatively small number of English language learners in identifying their rates of progress and in planning activities appropriate to their needs. In contrast, the school acknowledges that its use of assessment information to plan suitably challenging tasks for its highest-achieving students is less well developed. There are good quality plans which have the potential to address this issue.

In a similar way, the school recognizes that, while it looks carefully at the progress of individuals, its comparative analysis of the progress made by ethnic groups and by boys and girls, particularly in relation to similar schools, is limited. The school has begun to look to gathering more useful information about the different groups of students, but accepts that this is at a very early stage.

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 administrative team, including mathematics and literacy coaches, makes good use of data to identify patterns of achievement and, particularly, those students who require additional support. Information from these analyses is used well in setting clear goals which inform developments required across the school, within the format of the Comprehensive Education Plan.

Senior staff work very well with teachers in ensuring that assessment information is well used to plan interventions that are appropriate, and in subsequently identifying the improvements that have resulted. Information from student-teacher conferences is used well by teachers, both as a way of keeping track of students’ developing understanding, and in setting goals for students’ achievement through each class and grade. As a result, students know the next steps in their learning and understand that they are expected to meet goals that are progressively more challenging. This feature is particularly well developed in teachers’ assessment of students’ progress in writing, but the school recognizes its potential to guide teachers’ planning across other subjects. In response, professional development is planned to raise teachers’ confidence in using a very broad spectrum of assessments, including conference notes and internet-based assessments in planning appropriately challenging work for all students and in all subjects.

High expectations are seen throughout the school, and are shared with parents who view themselves as part of the community. They are well supported in helping their children by, for example, monthly literacy and mathematics workshops, as well as through the good quality written reports detailing the progress that their children are making. In this way, parents join with teachers, coaches, support staff and administrators in working hard to provide the best for the students. Students identified as in need of the greatest improvement are well supported through their targeted participation in the extended day program. This provision is further enhanced through the individual and small group support provided by paraprofessionals and the part-time intervention teacher.

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.

As well as having established a broad curriculum that fulfils all the requirements of the New York City Department of Education, the school has been successful in developing the opportunities available for its students. Attendance is a very high priority and the success of the school’s systems is seen in the low absence and tardiness rates.

The school budget has been carefully used in selecting and providing for resources, such as the good quality reading materials, that promote interest in the curriculum, and which make a positive contribution to student learning. In addition, successful grant applications over successive years have resulted in significant enrichment to the curriculum as in, for example, the establishment of the school’s curriculum for architecture. Through this, students’ skills in, for example, research and mathematics are further developed, which

impacts positively on their learning. The realignment of schedules was a perceptive strategy in the degree to which it allowed time for common preparation, and therefore professional development.

The school promotes a strong sense of accountability amongst its teachers. Meetings between the instructional team and teachers make good use of data in identifying interventions for individuals and groups, and in agreeing modifications to the curriculum when assessment information demonstrates that this is necessary. A good example of this is in the implementation of the practical and investigative aspects of the Everyday Mathematics program. Teachers readily took part in training to ensure the program's confident introduction, the success of which is seen in very positive student attitudes to the subject. These were summed up by one student, who said that mathematics was fun and easy to understand because, 'I can touch things during math lessons that help me see the problems.' This reflects the very strong motivation that most students have towards their learning. Teachers' use of assessment information is also seen in the impact of the school's development of differentiated instruction. Teachers respond well to students' academic and personal needs so that, for example, lessons, particularly in English language arts and mathematics, are characterized by groups of students working through different activities towards the same achievement goal.

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.

Professional development needs are accurately determined by data analysis and staff surveys, and occurs in grade team meetings and through in-class support provided by the facilitators and assistant principals throughout the year. In addition, staff attend workshops and avail themselves of off-site professional development offerings and then "turn-key" the information once back at school. External partners also reinforce academic expectations through the programs they offer. For instance, a highly successful partnership involving architects has resulted in students designing and building a model city, strengthening mathematical concepts such as ratio and scale.

The school has been proactive in responding to a considerable change in its staff over the last four years. As senior and more experienced staff have retired, the school has been able to select assistant principals, coaches and more recently qualified members of staff who have readily taken on planned developments to the curriculum and assessment. That staff share the principal's high expectations of themselves and of students is seen in the rigor which characterizes team and grade meetings. Team work is a strong feature of the school. Because of this, data which compares student outcomes across the school is readily shared, and intervention programs and peer observations, focused on best practice, put in place to address inconsistencies. As well as undertaking formal classroom observations, the principal and assistant principals make frequent informal visits to observe instruction and progress. This helps them in building a clear picture of the impact of professional development across the school, as well as in augmenting the understanding that they have of student performance through the analysis of data.

The principal is regarded highly by staff, students and parents. His considerable experience at the school has afforded him the opportunity to work with families over extended periods of time. This continuity of leadership is one of the reasons the school operates so smoothly and effectively. Clear and well-understood systems have been

developed and refined over time, and the school has been able to build strong relationships with support and grant providers which have a positive impact on its ability to achieve its planned 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 school has a good range of systems in place which help it to track the progress it is making towards achieving the goals that are established in the Comprehensive Education Plan and, more informatively, the principal's annual performance review. Systems for retrieving and analyzing student data are well established, and make it easy to assess each student's progress through the year. In this way, the impact of improvements can be tracked easily. For example, the school was able to make rapid adjustment to the curriculum pacing schedule when data showed that additional time was needed to ensure students' understanding of a topic. This speed of response is made possible by the monthly comparison of data with, for example, the demands of the curriculum through the year.

Periodic assessments in the form of teacher tests, unit tests and partnerships with vendors such as Princeton Review provide timely and vital information to enable the staff to determine when to stay the course or make revisions. This level of analysis has developed rapidly and, as yet, the school takes insufficient account of the comparative performance of different groups, such as girls and boys or the different ethnic groups, in its evaluations. This hampers it in planning suitable responses should an issue arise which impacts on the achievement of one of these groups. Together with a strong sense of team work, the levels of shared accountability that have been established across the school mean that staff are willing to make the necessary adjustments to curriculum or practice when the need for any plan revision or mid-course corrections is identified.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Maurice Wollin School (PS 004)	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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