

George J Werdan III Public School

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Public School 020

3050 Webster Avenue

Bronx

NY 10467

Principal: Carol Carlsen

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

This is a very large elementary and middle school serving an area that includes some significant social and economic challenges. The school serves an ethnically diverse population with a significant number of students having limited proficiency in English. Over 85% of the students are eligible for a free school lunch and a high proportion of students need extra help because they find learning hard. The school has approximately 1300 students, grades kindergarten through 8.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal gives inspired leadership that has established a caring and committed culture throughout the school.
- The staff shares the principal's vision for the future of the school and are dedicated to continuous school improvement in an environment where everyone is a learner.
- There is a very strong team spirit among staff.
- The students are very well behaved and well balanced young people who show great respect to others throughout the school.
- Attendance is good and the school has good systems for checking up on students who are absent.
- There is a common understanding of the rubrics and standards and staff and students know what work at different levels looks like.
- The school collects a lot of data on how well students are doing and uses the information well to identify those most in need of support and provide intervention strategies.
- The analysis of data shows that students make good progress from a low starting point even though grades are not as high as the school would like them to be yet.
- Parents have very positive views of the school and appreciate the dedication of the principal and her staff.
- Students know what levels they are working at and what they need to do to reach the next one.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to work closely with parents to increase their involvement and understanding in their child's schooling and seek their guidance on ways of motivating more parents to become more closely involved in the life and work of the school.
- Continue to raise the belief of the students in their capacity to be successful by helping them, their parents and the wider community to recognize and celebrate their achievements within and beyond the school, and equip them with the self confidence to make a positive contribution to their community.
- Refine the analysis of data to show value added, taking account of the contexts of individuals and groups of students.
- Explore the use of technology to make the collection and analysis of data more efficient and effective.

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Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school with many strengths.

The principal is well liked and respected for her positive and visionary leadership which has established a school community which cares for all its members and has a commitment to continuous improvement.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria.

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is overall proficient with some well developed aspects and some features that are undeveloped.

The school collects a lot of data on how well students are doing. This includes results of formal and informal tests, ongoing teacher assessments and self and peer assessments by the students. The information from this data is used very effectively to identify students who are falling behind with their learning and to plan and provide intervention strategies to accelerate their learning. Students whose home language is not English receive very good support to help them to become more proficient with the language so that it ceases to be a barrier to learning. Students who find learning difficult in some subjects are also identified early so that they can be given extra help before they fall too far behind. For example, the school could identify a student who excels at mathematics but needs support in literacy before the lack of facility in that area begins to affect the capacity to understand written mathematics problems. The school is particularly successful with these interventions and the data shows that students benefiting from them make good progress in their learning.

The analysis of the whole school data shows quite clearly that students start school with low levels of achievement but that they make good progress even if they do not reach the grades expected of their ages because of their low baseline on entry. The school uses a good combination of quantitative and qualitative data to check on students' progress and encourages them to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. This helps them to know what levels they are working at and what they need to do to reach the next one.

The school has a lot of data on student progress but does not factor in the context of different groups of students in terms of their gender, ethnicity, home language, attendance record, starting points etc to be able to identify any trends affecting the performance of specific groups. The school also needs to refine the analysis of data to enable it to identify more clearly how well it is doing compared with similar schools and to show any differences in the progress being made by different grades and classes within grades so that reasons for any differential in performance can be highlighted and remedied.

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Quality Statement 2: 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 overall.

The school sets broad goals for improvement but these lack measurability, partly because the mobility of students into and out the school distorts the results and means that the student body on which the targets were based is not the same as the one against which the results are checked. However, the school could get around this issue by factoring mobility into its analysis. This might be as simple as checking the percentage increase in grades overall and doing a second analysis that checks just the progress made by those students who went all through the grades at this school. For example, the school could set a target of increasing the proportion of students getting a particular level by a given percentage, but include in the final analysis only those students who have benefited from the school's culture all the way through that grade. It could also build into the equation a system to check the levels of students who enter the school part way through a year to evaluate the progress in the time that they have been in the school.

The school has very well developed systems for improving the performance of the students most at risk. A dedicated team of staff goes out of its way to identify such students and to provide support as early as possible so that these students do not fall into a cycle of underachievement. Staff goes out of their way to identify the barriers to learning for individuals, to tackle them and to monitor progress to ensure the strategies are being effective. They have no hesitation in reviewing strategies if they are not having a positive enough effect on the student's progress. The progress being made by students receiving support to improve their proficiency in English, and those having support in specific aspects of literacy, is testament to the success of these interventions.

The school expects students to do well. They know what level they are on and what level their teachers expect them to reach. All staff is committed to improving overall grades and to accelerating the progress of their students. Although there is a strong focus on interventions to support the students most at risk of falling behind, there is less emphasis on identifying those students who are particularly gifted or talented and helping them to exceed expectations. The school could usefully work with students and their parents to identify those with particular talents in a subject or in an aspect of sport or the arts and devise plans to help them build on their developing skills and achieve their potential. Such an initiative could do much to motivate students who find some traditional learning hard and raise their self esteem by helping to achieve success in the field in which they excel. The likely spin off for the school is that the raised self esteem in one area would generate confidence to tackle others where they have been less successful. Such an initiative could also help to raise the expectations that parents have of how well their children can do.

Staff is committed to continuous school improvement by helping the students to learn effectively. They could usefully set very specific targets for students on a weekly basis so that they can appreciate the incremental increases in their skills and knowledge through small steps. For example, for one student the target might be to always start a sentence with a capital letter, while for a more able student the target might be to use speech marks

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correctly. Students could be involved in helping to set such targets and to evaluate their success in achieving them.

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

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

The school aligns its curriculum very closely to the City and State standards. The standards are well understood by staff and students and there is a common understanding of the rubrics and what work at given levels looks like. This helps the school with its ongoing assessment and tracking of how well students are performing.

Teachers are deployed to maximize the dissemination of good practice throughout the school and to meet the needs of the different age groups. The principal regularly checks the quality of teaching through observing lessons and identifying strengths and areas of development. The focus of such observations is mainly on the mechanics of instructional technique and they could be sharpened up by focusing on what students are learning, or not learning, and why they are learning or not learning. This would help to identify whether all abilities within a class were being given hard enough work. A real strength of the teaching is the way teachers collaborate to ensure equity for their students.

The teachers keep students engaged in classes but the students say that some classes are rather more interesting than others. For example they spoke glowingly about science investigations into circuits and magnets where they were engaged in practical activities and about mathematics classes where they had practical problems to solve. However, they also said that they did not like some classes because the teachers talk too much and do not make the learning interesting enough. Generally, all the students cover the same work and the differences in ability are accounted for through providing texts at different levels of challenge or giving more support to the lower performing students. The school could usefully explore how to broaden the range of instructional techniques to ensure that all students get hard enough tasks to accomplish within a class. The school should also investigate how to make more effective use of technology to aid learning.

The students speak very highly of their teachers and the way they go the extra mile to engage them in learning. This results in good attendance rates and in students paying close attention in class and working hard. They also say that staff at the school care for them very well and that there is always someone to turn to if they are worried or upset about anything. This high quality care ensures that students feel safe and secure in school and in a comfortable state of mind to enjoy their learning free from worries and anxieties. This results in students who are very well mannered and polite individuals who know they are in school to learn.

Quality Statement 4: 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 overall.

The principal has a very clear vision for the future of the school. She recognizes its strengths, but is not complacent about the need to continually seek to improve it. She

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shares her vision very clearly with all staff. She has assembled an experienced and committed senior management team who work well together to review constantly how well the school is doing and what it could do better. All staff is committed to continuous improvement and to using data more effectively to identify what is going well and what needs to be improved. However, staff does continually refine and improve their understanding of the use of data to highlight what works well and what could be improved. The school ought to explore the possibility of making more use of technology to collect and analyze data in a more efficient and effective way than is currently used.

The school is aware at an intuitive level of the quality of teaching throughout the school. A more refined use of data that tracked the progress of different groups of students could help to identify teaching strengths and areas for development for individual teachers based on the evidence of how well students are learning. This could then lead to even more focused professional development for teachers based on clearly identified professional learning needs. There is already a model for such an initiative with the Reading First data and the systems from this program could be modified and extended to other areas.

The school has established a very strong team spirit among the staff. They work together as a cohesive and effective team because they all adhere to the same principles and have the same dedication to continuous school improvement. The day-to-day management of the school is very efficient and it is an orderly and well run community. It has reached its current successful state because the principal has gained the respect of the whole school community. She has helped staff to appreciate that the only constant in life is change and that, because of the common aims and values and supportive team culture within the school, they are ready to embrace change that benefits their students.

Quality Statement 5: 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 with some strengths.

The school develops clear plans for improvement though some of the goals could be more measurable and specific and interim goals would help it to identify the small steps that make up the longer journey. It would be useful to develop structures to enable students to have a greater say in how the school should develop. This could be accomplished through having a democratically elected school council that meets regularly to discuss issues of importance to the students. Such a body would give the school a very useful perspective on how well the school is doing. For example, some students said the school could be improved by having organized games during the lunch period. Such a simple measure might help to make that time a more enjoyable time for the students and encourage them to settle even more quickly to their classes in the afternoon.

More consultation with parents when devising future plans would also be useful in helping the school to understand what is important to them, especially if any such surveys were devised with the parents so that the questions were on issues that they recognized as important rather than just on the issues the school thinks that parents should consider important.

Each new plan devised by the school uses as its starting point a reflection on the success

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of the previous one. In this way the school uses planning in a systematic and ordered way to produce incremental growth year-to-year.

Other key observations

This is a good school that may not get the credit it deserves because despite the good progress that students make the overall grades gained do not always match those expected for the ages of the students because of their low starting points. However, the school does a very good job in giving the students a belief in their ability to succeed in school and beyond, so that they talk about securing employment as accountants, teachers, and newspaper reporters. It also gives them the confidence to tell the adults who care for them what they think about their lessons and how they think they could improve the school. The school needs to continue to develop the students' belief in their capacity to be successful by celebrating their achievements and helping their parents and the local community to appreciate their current successes and their potential to achieve even more.

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PART 4: EVALUATION CRITERIA GRADE SUMMARY

| Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time. | o | ✓ | + |
|--|----------|----------|----------|
| <p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards-based, • consistent across students, • capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice, <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the performance of different students to be compared, and • learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified. | | | X |
| <p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p> <p>{This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}</p> | X | | |
| <p>1.3 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, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p> | | X | |
| Quality Statement 2: 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. | o | ✓ | + |
| <p>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 it develops plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.</p> | | X | |
| <p>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 warranting attention.</p> | | | X |
| <p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p> | | | X |
| <p>2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.</p> | | | X |
| <p>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.</p> | | | X |

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| Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student. | 0 | ✓ | + |
|--|---|---|---|
| 3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals. | | | X |
| 3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals. | | | X |
| 3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes. | | | X |
| 3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes. | | | X |
| 3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. 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 | |
| 3.6 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 |
| 3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention. | | | X |
| 3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students. | | | X |
| 3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals. | | | X |

| Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student. | 0 | ✓ | + |
|---|---|---|---|
| 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 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 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress. | | | X |
| 4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams. | | | X |
| 4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change. | | | X |
| 4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed. | | | X |

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| Quality Statement 5: 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. | o | ✓ | + |
|--|---|----------|----------|
| 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 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 interim 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 each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes. | | | X |