



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Melrose School**

**Public School / Middle School 29**

**758 Courtlandt Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10451**

**Principal: Dorothy Carmichael**

**Dates of review: January 25 - 26, 2007**

**Reviewer: Cheryl Baker**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Melrose School is a pre-kindergarten through grade 8 school with an enrollment of 792 students. Fourteen percent are special education students and 15.7% are English language learners. The predominant home language is Spanish. Just over 70% of students are Hispanic, 29.5% are Black and less than 1% is from Asian or other backgrounds. The school is Title I eligible. The percent of qualifying students is on par with similar schools and above that of City schools. Attendance for the period 2003-2005 averaged just below 92%, slightly below the City average but above that of similar schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Structures the school environment to provide a safe and secure place for children to learn.
- Provides specialized programs and interventions to address the broad spectrum of student's' learning needs.
- Provides students with a rich array of curricular and extracurricular programs that enrich their experiences in music and the visual and performing arts.
- Provides a friendly and welcoming school culture in which students and parents feel respected and valued.
- Establishes numerous partnerships with university, cultural, civic, social service and other organizations in support of improved instruction, learning and the emotional wellbeing of students.
- Supports teachers' induction and professional growth through structured intervisitations within the school and between similar schools.
- Celebrates students' academic and artistic work through colorful bulletin boards and displays.
- Recognizes and rewards students and their parents for achieving attendance goals.
- Ensures a smoothly functioning, well organized, child-centered institution through the establishment of well understood policies and procedures that are embedded in the school.

### What the school needs to improve

- Increase professional development in the analysis of assessment and other pertinent data in order to help teachers gain deeper knowledge of what each student knows and is able to do, and where they need additional targeted support.
- Provide teachers with professional development in techniques that will increase their capacity to successfully differentiate instruction to improve the achievement of each student.
- Continue to increase the regular use of interim assessment results to measure students' incremental progress and create plans that address identified areas of weakness.
- Refine practices that support students' transitions from the elementary grades to the middle school and from middle to high school.
- Communicate increased high expectations for student achievement to parents and students and encourage them to set ambitious annual goals for academic achievement.
- Continue to foster mechanisms that support the consistent delivery of the curriculum in all content areas across all grades and schools.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

Public School/ Middle School 29 is led by a seasoned principal who is completing her twentieth year as an administrator at the school and her forty-second year in public education. She has continued to move the school forward, most recently sharpening the focus on teachers' conferencing skills as a means of directing instruction to identified student needs. Substantial changes in curriculum have been undertaken over the last two years with the institution of balanced literacy and Everyday Math, both of which are supported through coaching and professional development. At the same time, the school transitioned from a pre-kindergarten through grade 5 elementary school to its present status as a combined elementary and middle school. In June 2007 the first eighth grade will graduate from The Melrose School. The school's emphasis on integrating the arts into the academic program is evidenced through the many displays of students' creative work throughout the school.

### 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.**

Administrators and school leaders routinely review data from State and City assessments as scores are released, to gain a global understanding of the progress of the school. They also analyze student performance by grade level, content area, achievement level and strand. The results of formative assessments, largely related to student progress in English language arts, inform their understanding of the progress in classrooms. Fine-grained assessment data related to the other academic areas is less well developed. The school is aware of its cohort progress and, in particular, the impact that the intake of new students at middle school and the introduction of a new curriculum have made on annual scores. Student achievement over the last three years has fluctuated by grade level and content area. Overall achievement remains on par with similar schools.

The school is making use of the data provided in the Annual School Report to gain a deeper understanding of the relative progress of its ethnic, gender and socio-economic sub-groups. School level analysis of the progress of these groups remains a goal. The progress of English language learners and special education students is monitored by assessment practices embedded in their respective programs. The school provides a variety of instructional settings for these students which are designed as a result of assessment of students' learning needs. The achievement of English language learners in English and mathematics has exceeded that of similar and City schools in recent history. The performance of special education students has been on par with that of similar schools.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

School leaders collaborate with relevant stakeholders to craft plans for school improvement. The plans are informed by the analysis of student data. They largely set annual improvement goals with some incremental checkpoints to assess progress. The Comprehensive Education Plan, the attendance plan, the school safety plan, the behavior intervention plan and the principal's annual goals are among the documents that drive the activity of leaders, staff, students and parents. Goals focus broadly on the school as a whole, on academic subject areas and on groups of students whose performance has been identified as a particular focus area, such as those with attendance or behavioral issues. The principal’s annual goals focus on improving instruction in English language arts and include monthly activities designed to support the goal of a 5% increase in achievement.

For students receiving special education services, English language learning support or academic intervention services, detailed individual plans are designed and monitored with regularity by committees dedicated to determining the best learning interventions for these identified students.

Expectations for student achievement and behavior are communicated to students and parents through the school agenda that is provided to each student. Open houses and parent workshops help parents to understanding the school’s academic goals. Parents are encouraged to conference with teachers regarding their child’s progress. As the school has evolved from an elementary school to a combined elementary and middle school, administrators have recognized the need to focus more sharply on helping students and parents to set high expectations for achievement as they transition through the grades.

**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 proficient.**

The school has begun to implement the mandated curricula in English language arts and mathematics in 2004-2005 and follows the State and City guidelines for science and social studies. Meaningful interim data is embedded in the English curriculum giving skilled teachers detailed and regular data about student progress. Unit tests in mathematics help to monitor the effectiveness of instruction. The use of tightly aligned assessments in the other academic subjects is less common. Instruction is designed to actively engage students in their learning and, especially in the arts, they respond with interest and enthusiasm. Instruction is commonly differentiated by program or, within classes, by activity rather than by the specific learning need identified for each student.

Assistant principals monitor the delivery of the curriculum and instruction at their assigned levels, elementary and middle school. They hold teachers accountable through the review of lesson plans, report card grades and teachers’ self-assessments. Coaches monitor instruction in English and mathematics. Oversight of the continuity of instruction in other disciplines is less well structured.

Budget, staffing and scheduling decisions are directly influenced by the analysis of student performance. For example, numerous professional development programs and academic intervention programs are supported through the local budget in an effort to improve teaching and raise achievement. Grade level teachers have common planning time once per week to plan for instruction. Additional staff have been hired to provide coaching for teachers implementing the mandated curricula.

Students reported feeling safe at school. They can identify teaching and counseling staff who they could talk to about personal as well as academic problems. Middle school students appreciate recent actions taken by administration to bring greater order to the halls and classrooms.

Improving student attendance and promptness is another of the principal's annual goals. Increased efforts by attendance and guidance personnel, the introduction of an automated calling system and an extensive rewards program for parents and students has raised current attendance averages from 91% to 93%.

**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 proficient.**

The principal and assistant principals run the school as a team, often with the input of coaches and unit coordinators. Collectively, they monitor the change initiatives in the school and ensure that the institution functions smoothly. This model is replicated at grade levels and in other committees charged with responsibility for instruction, intervention or support. Hiring is done by committee and new candidates are thoroughly screened for academic preparation, commitment and instructional skills. Capacity to use data is of increasing interest to the school.

Teachers are supported through extensive professional development in balanced literacy practices, training in the implementation of 'Studios in Schools', the implementation of Everyday Math and Impact Math, and other topics identified through teacher interest surveys. Teacher training in the use of the Princeton Review interim assessment data began recently. Additional training in the analysis and use of assessment and other data to inform instruction remains a goal, as does explicit training in techniques for the differentiation of instruction for individual students.

Assistant principals, coaches and unit coordinators observe instruction. They may provide effective feedback regarding instruction or classroom management, depending on their role and expertise. The school supports intervisitations among classrooms in the school and at other schools to help teachers increase their instructional repertoires.

The school partners with numerous artistic, academic, civic, performance, and social service agencies to broaden and deepen students' curricular and co-curricular experiences. The integration of the visual and performing arts into instruction in English language arts and mathematics is noteworthy.

**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.**

Meetings of the school leadership team, the cabinet, grade level teachers, unit coordinators and the pupil personnel team provide regular opportunities for school and student plans to be reviewed. Depending upon the evaluation of the plan and its action steps, changes in activities or interventions may be made.

Use of interim assessment data is increasing in the school and is helping teachers to adjust instruction accordingly. For example, changes in the topical concentration of mathematics instruction resulted from the recent analysis of interim assessment data.

Progress in achieving the principal's annual goal is addressed at cabinet meetings. Attendance data is reviewed relative to the actions in the attendance plan. At the classroom level, teachers are learning how to improve practices, such as conferencing, to provide immediate data regarding learning that can be used to plan for successive instruction and their progress is monitored by coaches.

For students with special education, academic intervention and English language learning plans, frequent measures of progress and resulting adjustments in instructional or support interventions are routine. Regular comparisons of student progress in all academic areas across the pre-kindergarten through grade 8 spectra remains a goal.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Melrose School (PS/MS 29)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	