



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Norwood Heights School

Public School 056

**341 East 207 Street
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Priscilla Sheeran

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Reviewer: John Hudson

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Norwood Heights School provides education for about 540 students from kindergarten through grade 5. Approximately two-thirds of the enrolment is Hispanic, 15% are Black, 15% are Asian and 7% are White. The main languages spoken are English and Spanish. One fifth of the students are English language learners and approximately 7% are special education learners.

The proportion of students with Title 1 eligibility is higher than the average for City schools. At approximately 92%, attendance is about average for the City.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is very well led by an inspirational principal, supported by her assistant principal and leadership team.
- Members of the school community benefit from the professional learning culture which permeates the school.
- Students in greatest need of improvement are given particular attention.
- Continuous review and revision of units of study ensure that student achievement improves to meet challenging goals.
- The high quality of care is clearly apparent, individual students feel respected by all members of the school community.
- Students are engaged by interesting lessons in stimulating learning environments.
- Well targeted professional development underpins support for student progress and achievement.
- The school encourages a very positive relationship with parents.
- Students benefit from, and enjoy, a broad range of educational trips and clubs.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to improve and refine the quality and use of student performance data.
- Develop further the program to track the progress of ethnic groups.
- Continue to track the performance and progress of groups of students based on comparisons with other schools.
- Take advantage of a deepening understanding of data to further improve the impact of school plans on student progress and achievement.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

The school is a very caring environment where teachers know students by name and work hard to improve their academic and personal performance. Students, teachers and other professionals respect one another and relationships are very positive throughout the school.

The principal shares a commitment to continuously improve each student's personal and academic achievement with all her staff. Teachers have high expectations of students and of each other, and make good use of data to deepen their understanding of student needs. The school maintains a very close watch on the progress of each student. Meeting the needs of English language learners, special education students and students in greatest need of improvement are high priorities.

A culture of goal setting and curriculum improvement, supported by weekly planning meetings and lunch time review sessions, ensures that teaching is stimulating, with appropriate pace and differentiation. Learners are engaged in planned and well-resourced activities. Work in the classroom is extended through a broad range of after-school activities and educational trips. Teachers benefit from professional development opportunities which are focused towards specific needs identified through planning and review meetings.

Using up-to-date information on student progress and performance, the principal identifies opportunities for further motivating student interest and raising achievement. For example, the school has made a substantial investment in laptop computers and wireless networking to encourage student internet research and high quality presentation.

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 makes very good use of a broad range of objective, standards-based reading, mathematics and English language arts assessments, together with other objective data, such as attendance rates, to develop a sound understanding of student performance. This information is augmented by regular unit of study assessment results, student portfolios, and other records of student achievement. The principal, assistant principal, coaches and teachers analyze these results to ensure all individuals, classes and grade levels are making at least the expected progress.

Great care is taken to track the progress and performance of higher achieving students, English language learners, special education students and students in greatest need of improvement. Individual education plans are fine-tuned on a regular basis.

The school is beginning to monitor the progress and performance of individual students and groups within each ethnic group more regularly so it is able to identify any shortcomings or improvements quickly.

Comparisons of academic performance and progress between individual students, classrooms and grade levels are well developed. The progress of students, classes and grades is tracked over time from kindergarten to grade 5. The school has begun to compare performance and progress with other schools within its local network.

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.

All members of the teaching staff are continuously engaged in discussions about the academic and personal achievement of each student. These discussions are formalized into weekly planning meetings for each grade level, where teachers, literacy and mathematics coaches, the principal and her assistant are involved in collaborative reviews of student progress. These meetings, which are characterized by the commitment and involvement of all participants, are used to fine tune details in the content of units of study and plans for teaching them at individual student level. Incremental, achievable goals are adjusted to enable students to progress at rates matched to their capabilities.

Plans for English language learners, special education students and higher achieving students are tracked with particular care. The school is particularly good at supporting the needs of students in greatest need of improvement. The school is aware of the need to measure the performance and progress of other groupings, including ethnic groups.

High expectations permeate the school. Students are developing self-evaluation techniques and are able to discuss their academic strengths and weaknesses, and the steps they need to take in order to progress as they move through the school.

The principal, supported by her assistant principal, sets goals and plans for the following year, which take account of the accumulated revisions of all units of study across each grade. Plans focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and the school as a whole.

Very strong relationships with parents and constant sharing of information relating to progress and achievement ensure that parents feel involved in the planning and review of their children’s progress. Parents are able to discuss concerns and can work with the school to resolve any problems.

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 responds to the needs of students by tracking their progress, and preparing them to achieve well in standardized tests. Weekly reviews of student performance prior

to unit of study planning meetings ensure that the quality of teaching and alignment of the curriculum to student needs continues to improve. Outcomes include innovative improvements to the mandated curriculum, including the use of unit of study boards, student research on the internet and use of technology for communication with their peers. These changes promote student engagement and improve achievement. The principal and her staff are constantly discussing best practice in accelerating student learning.

Regular review of student assessments and frequent informal classroom observations promote teacher accountability. Regular formal observations, followed by one-to-one meetings with the principal, ensure the effectiveness of teachers in enabling individual students to meet challenging targets. Teachers understand that they are held accountable for the progress and achievement of each student they teach.

Whole school planning is highly developed. Through unit planning meetings, grade review meetings and other analyses of data, resource needs are identified, enabling the principal to take informed decisions on budget expenditure to promote learning. Wireless networking and the provision of 30 laptops on each floor of the school are recent examples of this process.

Staffing decisions are informed by detailed information on the skills required to continue building a very strong staff team. Best use of available teacher and other professional staff time is fine-tuned at weekly unit planning meetings to ensure necessary differentiation is in place to promote highest quality student engagement and learning.

Teachers and other professionals know their students well and there is a very high level of mutual respect. Students are confident and can confide in their teachers if they need to. As a result of this and of the excellent relationships existing between home and school, levels of attendance are high.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

Teachers are selected on their ability to work effectively in teams, engage with students and use assessment and other data to monitor progress and drive up achievement. Leadership team members are assessed on these criteria together with their ability to lead and plan with greatest effectiveness towards achieving challenging goals.

Weekly collaborative planning meetings, "Lunch and Learn" sessions and other review processes are used to discuss best practice in achieving goals and enable participants to continuously self-evaluate their levels of skill. Professional development needs are identified for individuals and teams. Recent innovations include training to analyze data to gain a deeper understanding of student performance and to use the internet for research and presentation purposes.

Teachers are beginning to observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goals of sharing best practice and improving student outcomes. Weekly planning meetings are rigorous and professional in their operation. They provide an excellent example of how teamwork is used to drive improvement.

The principal, who is greatly respected by the school community, is highly visible around the school and, together with her assistant principal, visits most classes each day. Parents and students describe the principal as kind, caring, wonderful and a good communicator.

School procedures are clear and well understood by all. The school provides a caring and professional learning environment.

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.

Planned curriculum units include regular diagnostic assessment processes which are collaboratively reviewed in weekly planning meetings throughout the year. The principal, assistant principal and literacy and mathematics coaches use interim assessment data to rigorously monitor the comparative performance of students in different classes as they progress towards stated targets. Teachers as well as senior staff develop a clear understanding of the performance of each student and each grade over time. The school has just begun to compare results of kindergarten classes with schools in the local network. The principal plans to extend these comparative studies through the school as students move from grade to grade.

Teachers analyze student achievement data to ensure they are on target to achieve curriculum goals. Frequent diagnostic measurement enables teachers to fine tune curriculum plans and ensure students remain on track. The Comprehensive Education Plan is revised to take account of changes in goals and plans for curriculum, budget and staffing. Year by year the principal leads the school towards ever higher expectations of student achievement as the school incrementally raises the bar with carefully selected goals and rigorously monitored plans to improve student progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Norwood Heights School (PS 56)	∅	✓	+
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	