



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Mother Hale Elementary School

Public School 65

**677 East 141 Street
Bronx
NY 10454**

Principal: Tashon McKeithan

Dates of review: January 30 - 31, 2007

Reviewer: Peter Friend

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

This is an elementary school with 492 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school is Title 1 eligible with 97.3% of students qualifying, a higher percentage than similar and City schools.

The school population comprises 67 % Hispanic students and 32 % Black students. The remaining students are of Asian or other heritage. Sixteen percent are English language learners and 10 % are special education students.

The attendance rate of 91 % is lower than similar and City schools. High teacher turnover is a significant barrier to learning. The principal has been recently appointed to the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The new principal is regarded as calm, approachable and efficient.
- Valuable professional discussion takes place about students' individual performance in literacy and mathematics.
- Communication within the school has improved and routines run smoothly.
- Absences are followed up systematically and attendance has improved.
- The school makes effective use of data to create individual programs for special education students and those who are falling behind.
- In some classes, effective marking informs students about what they did well and how they could improve.
- The library is well stocked and is helping to improve students' interest in books.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote more consistency in the interpretation and use of data between classes and across grades.
- Track achievement by gender and ethnicity and sharpen the identification of students' strengths and weaknesses.
- Establish clear procedures for goal setting at school, grade and individual level.
- Use the information from data to align work for all students more closely to need, particularly for higher achievers.
- Widen the analysis of data so that instruction and goal setting are better aligned.
- Promote a more consistent approach to dealing with students' behavior both within and outside classrooms.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school with some proficient features.

The school has a new principal and, together with other leaders, she is beginning to set clear goals for school improvement. The staff understand these goals and are committed to achieving them by improving students' performance. Communication within the school is good.

Data about students' performance is gathered, but is insufficiently well analyzed and evaluated. Consequently, such information does not always clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses in performance, particularly across classes and within grades. The result is that sometimes work is not sufficiently well matched to students' needs and instructional programs lack consistency between classes.

The school is aware of the need to improve consistency of practice and has introduced new monthly records required from each class, deployed support to improve instructional strategies, and offered opportunities for teachers within grades to plan together. These initiatives have yet to make a significant impact on performance.

The school is proficient in using data to improve the performance of special education students and those deemed at risk. Here, diagnostic data identifies weaknesses effectively and instruction programs are closely matched to need.

Absence is followed up systematically and attendance has improved, though it remains below the City average. Members of staff feel involved in the process of change and parents are consulted about their views. In some classes, marking informs students well about what they need to do to improve their work. The newly opened library is a good resource. Effective instruction is helping to improve students' interest in books and knowledge of how to locate information. Overall, under the new principal, the school has demonstrated the capacity to improve its systems of gathering, interpreting and using data.

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 undeveloped.

The school gathers a considerable amount of data about individual students' performance from testing literacy and mathematical skills as well as from the City and State assessments. However, this information is not used as extensively as it could be to track progress and is often kept merely as a summative record. The information is sometimes used to group students, but not to obtain a clear picture of performance across classrooms or grade levels. Insufficient attention has been given to comparisons of performance with similar schools. City and State assessments show results below the average for similar and City schools, particularly in grades 3 and 5 in mathematics. Time for the subject has been increased in grades 3, 4 and 5 as a consequence. Higher achieving students have been identified, but so far no further action has ensued. The school has begun to

emphasize the teaching of basic skills in reading, spelling and comprehension to improve students' performance.

The school is more proficient in the use of data with its special education students and English language learners. A wide range of summative and diagnostic information is used effectively to pinpoint students' weaknesses, particularly in literacy, and a well-planned remedial program often follows. Such students are often enthusiastic about their work and make significant progress in reading, spelling and writing.

The newly developed monthly reading and mathematics assessments required from each class identify students deemed to be at risk, but are also beginning to help class teachers identify strengths and weaknesses in the understanding of their students. In a few grades, teachers discuss patterns of achievement across the age group. However, there is no systematic tracking of students by ethnic group or gender.

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 undeveloped.

Data is gathered about the performance of individual students, particularly in literacy and mathematics, but as yet there is little coherent setting of goals either at the individual, class or grade level. The new principal is beginning to work with school leaders and teachers to set such goals, but this process is more at the level of determining policy than providing detailed targets and timeframes.

The exception here is again the work with special education students and with those deemed at risk. The programs of remediation are sharply focused on individual need and goals for small step improvements are set and monitored. The school is more effective in using data to improve the performance of the students in greatest need.

The staff are aware of the overall plans for improving performance and teachers have received training or support to help them improve instructional strategies. Teachers display a high degree of commitment to improving their students' performance though effectiveness varies between classes and grades. Parents are well informed about plans to improve reading and are proud of the new library, which has been extensively stocked with new books. Parents are more critical of the school's inconsistent approach to dealing with bad behavior. They feel that this undermines some of the expectations set for students in their academic work.

The school is beginning to emphasize independent reading skills and uses consultants to observe lessons, demonstrate good instruction techniques and provide professional development. More collaborative planning and target setting are encouraged, though effectiveness varies across the school.

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 undeveloped.

The school’s proficiency in this area is limited by the superficial analysis, interrogation and use of data. Much of the information gathered is about individual students’ summative performance. There is little systematic analysis of patterns of strength or weakness, and no rigorous analysis of differences in performance by ethnicity, gender or level of previous achievement. Consequently, the grouping of students for instruction is not well informed. Neither is instruction sufficiently well differentiated and, consequently, work is not matched closely enough to students’ needs. The school has identified that some students have difficulties following the present mathematics curriculum. However, the lack of formative data limits the extent to which adjustments can be made in classrooms so that the work is more appropriate for these students. The exception again is with those students who have been identified for specific help or intervention. Their programs of instruction are well tailored to their particular needs because data about them has been gathered with a clear purpose and are more deeply interrogated. For example, detailed analysis of how students decode words and use context to help decipher unknown words provides rich information about what instructional activities will best result in improvement. Such techniques are occasionally used in classrooms too, but not consistently.

The school is beginning to improve its budgeting decisions to boost the priorities for improving literacy and mathematical skills. The library is well stocked and well used. The Reading Recovery program and other interventions are achieving success with individual students. The requirement of each teacher to submit monthly records for reading and mathematics makes teachers more accountable. Collaborative planning in mathematics in grade 3 has resulted in more cohesive planning and offers the opportunity to share good practice.

In the main, students are engaged with their instruction programs in the classrooms though sometimes the pace of lessons could be brisker. The students trust their teachers and the teachers are well aware of students’ social needs. Attendance is a high priority in the school. Absence of a student immediately triggers a response and the school’s follow-up procedures are rigorous and systematic. The school’s attendance rate remains below average, but has improved from a low level.

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 undeveloped with proficient aspects.

The new principal has had little opportunity so far to appoint new staff, but she has begun to work closely with leaders who are willing to take on responsibility. She has already made a beneficial impact on the school. She is regarded as calm, approachable and efficient. Together with other leaders and staff she is beginning to sharpen the school’s priorities to improve basic skills in literacy and mathematics. Professional development and the use of consultants to support teachers have helped teachers to improve instructional strategies and promote more consistency across classes. Intervention teams and outside support services for special education students are well deployed.

Inconsistency between classes and continuity between grades are weaknesses. The principal and other leaders are aware of this. Classroom observations and professional support are used to highlight successful instructional strategies. The opportunities for teachers within grade levels to discuss performance and plan together help in the setting of agreed targets. Teachers in grade 1 have been particularly keen to plan together. The result of this collaboration has been a more consistent curriculum in literacy and mathematics. The grade 3 teachers' discussion of the students' performance in a mathematics test resulted in agreeing action to remediate weaknesses. The discussion ranged over the types of mistakes made in the tests and how instruction might improve scores. The analysis of errors was superficial, but stimulated a useful discussion about which basic mathematical skills to concentrate on and how to improve students' test techniques. At the end of the meeting, agreement was reached to devote some class time to revise the basic number skills covered in the tests. These examples illustrate promising beginnings in building and aligning capacity.

The school runs smoothly. Communication within the school is clear. The principal consults staff and parents about contemplated changes. The recent alterations to the lunchtime arrangements have reduced the numbers of students in the playground at any one time, but as yet have not had a significant impact on reducing poor behavior. The school has a small number of links with the community, but these are not sufficiently well aligned with the school's 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 undeveloped.

The systematic monitoring, evaluation and revision of plans, practices and performance are weak. Most of the data collected in the school is summative and is insufficiently well analyzed to inform subsequent instruction. There is little systematic diagnostic assessment of patterns of strengths and weaknesses except with those students in need of intervention. Consequently, there are few meaningful comparisons of students' progress across classrooms or within grade levels except as summative statements.

The monthly running records in literacy and mathematics increase consistency in data collection, but analysis is not sufficiently searching to ensure work is closely matched to the needs of all the students, particularly the higher achievers.

The monthly records, professional discussion and support for teachers are all beginning to address the inconsistency of approach to using data, planning and instruction between classes. As yet, examples of coherence are in the minority, but there are instances of good practice to be spread. The commitment of the staff is a good starting point. The informative marking of students' work in some classes is another. At its best, such marking clearly identifies what students do well and how they could improve their work. Some students talk clearly about what they need to do next to improve their reading and writing.

Some of the best practice lies in the provision for special education students. Rigorous analysis of strengths and weaknesses, in reading for example, underpin clear plans for improving identified basic skills. Teachers keep meticulous track of progress, for example, in how students use letter blends to decode words. Strategies to help them deal with unknown words are taught and often successfully applied. Periodic assessment of

progress leads to the revision of plans or instruction strategies. Small but significant steps in progress are often made. Such good practice is not yet applied to the planning of work generally in the classrooms.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Mother Hale Elementary (PS65)	∅	✓	+
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		