



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Mohegan School

Community School 067

**2024 Mohegan Avenue
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Mrs. Emily B Grimhall

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Reviewer: David King

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

This school is located on the edge of South Bronx in the Tremont area in a building that has been standing for 84 years. The school's motto is 'Kids First, High Expectations, No Excuses', a doctrine firmly endorsed by all the staff at the school.

The school serves students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. There are 829 students enrolled with 75% Hispanic, 24% a Black and the remainder White or Asian students. There are roughly equal numbers of boys and girls and there is a large population of English language learners (16%) and special education students (17%). There is a high level of mobility amongst the students with many new arrivals and some students being away from the school for lengthy periods of time due to family circumstances. Attendance is 92% which is slightly below that of other similar schools and the City average. Eighty-nine percent of students are Title 1 eligible which is higher than the City average.

There are 56 teaching staff and a number of support workers including subject coaches and special education staff. This is an experienced staff with 60% having more than five years experience. The budget has been used to support the neediest students in the school and to limit class sizes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Provides strong leadership and has a clear vision underlined by its motto 'Kids First, High Expectations, No Excuses' which is firmly delivered.
- Has maintained year-on-year improvements in student performance in English language arts and mathematics at levels 3 and 4.
- Uses data in all forms very effectively to monitor student performance and progress.
- Uses the budget wisely to provide effective support and teaching for English language learners and special education students.
- Schedules a range of programs for levels 1 and 2 students and those students close to the level boundaries.
- Maintains a bright, cheerful and clean learning environment for the students.
- Shares information, goals and targets with parents and students.
- Conducts regular formal and informal observations of teachers, providing prompt and valuable feedback for staff development.
- Holds regular formal and informal staff group meetings to share student information for future planning.
- Retains its staff by empowering them and building capacity.

What the school needs to improve

- Use data to identify the progress of the stable cohort of the school and carry out a longitudinal survey of each cohort to determine value-added information.
- Complete a full comparison of student performance by subject areas, gender and ethnic group.
- Provide professional development on classroom management and prepare a peer observation schedule for teachers, supported by the administration.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

Since 2003, Mohegan School has gone from strength to strength. The principal has created a school where the staff feel empowered, where students enjoy learning, and where parents are happy to send their children. The principal has very strong values and insists on high standards. She is deeply committed to her students getting the best start to their education and she has the full support of her staff in trying to achieve that goal. She works very closely with her administration and knows the strengths of the individuals on her staff.

The school's performance in English language arts and mathematics has shown a yearly improvement over the last four years, although there is no complacency and the school cabinet and staff are constantly reviewing progress and updating provision for the students. The school has a number of strengths, the key ones being the detailed knowledge that is held about each student and the ease of communication that exists between school and home. Instruction is delivered through a range of programs designed to ensure that students make progress at all levels. The students themselves are well mannered and articulate young people.

Signage around the school promotes the motto 'Kids First, High Expectations, No Excuses'. There are also signs promoting 'Mohegan's High Five' about being prepared to learn, being responsible, being respectful of staff and each other, being respectful of property, and being safe.

The areas for improvement are ones that the school is aware of and is intent on putting together action plans to deliver. The school has a good mixture of experience and youthfulness in its workforce and has the capacity to improve even further by continuing to raise achievement and retaining more students in grades 5 and 6.

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 well developed.

The school regularly collects data to track the progress of students year by year for the whole school. The picture is one of an improving school where English language arts scores at levels 3 and 4 have improved from 28.4% in 2004 to 45.7% in 2005 and are being maintained into 2006. The picture is even better in mathematics with improvements being made from 13.3% in 2001 to 51.3% in 2006. The administration has plans for the maintenance of this progress and for the longitudinal tracking of cohorts of students. This is designed to enable staff to have a clearer picture of the progress made by students in their time in school, and how much the school has contributed to their achievement.

The school has made comparisons of its own progress against other schools, but has yet to complete a full comparison of student performance by subject areas, gender or ethnic groups.

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

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

The school is fully aware of the performance of its students and continues to set challenging targets for them. Many students, particularly in grades 4, 5 and 6, are aware of their levels and how to improve. Assessment folders reveal that students are informed about where they are within a level - high, intermediate or low - through an elaborate color coding system and they are aware of how to improve their percentage score.

Goals and expectations are shared with parents. A parent teacher group meets once a month and there is also a newsletter produced monthly. Parents’ meetings take place twice a year to enable them to keep track of their children’s progress and parent workshops are arranged to inform them about the texts the students are using, what the teachers are working on with the students and how to get on line to review data themselves. The workshops are held regularly and target particular groups of parents each time.

Using its data, the school targets students not meeting the standard for additional coaching and extended day classes in English language arts and mathematics. This strategy is further enhanced with similar groups made up of the ‘slippables’ and ‘pushables’ at the boundary of levels 2 and 3. A Friday academy has been established and a Saturday school enrichment program is planned for level 3 and 4 performers to maintain standards. Parents are included in this process and information readily exchanged.

At a grade 3 conference led by an assistant principal, teachers were directed on ways to explore data and assessment and provide feedback to students. Teachers are happy to use data to inform future planning and to change groupings. Assessments take place every six weeks. Teachers are exploring ways to develop a rubric so that students know what the levels mean and how they can improve.

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 follows the mandated curriculum and the staff use their knowledge of the students to decide on method of instruction and groupings. Timings for coverage may change but content is standard. Classrooms offer differentiated activity according to performance level. There is also a program of additional teaching to meet the needs of the students with maximum group sizes of four for special education groups and ten for level 1 and 2 general education students. Planning and goal-setting is apparent within the Comprehensive Education Plan for all subject areas. The staffing of the school reflects specific needs with extra staffing for special education students and English language learners. Eight special education classes are staffed at all grades and there are bi-lingual classes for grades 3/4 and 5/6. In addition there are inclusion classes for grades 4 through 6.

The staff are familiar with planning together and helping each other with resources. Regular meetings are held at all times, including 'lunch and learn' where staff share good practice with the focus always on students improving their learning.

Students enjoy receiving interesting instruction and feel challenged when asked to think about strategies for achievement. They are encouraged to move forward with their thinking and feel well supported. The staff are respectful of parents and there have been instances of staff and parents working collaboratively. Attendance is around 92%, slightly below that of other similar schools, and is monitored carefully. The school is fully aware of issues unique to their community such as the transient nature of the population. There are incentives for good attendance including certificates and movie tickets.

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.

The principal has an experienced staff group, many of whom worked in the school during low points in its history and chose to continue in the school. All three assistant principals have worked in the school since 1999. The staff share a common vision and some have children of their own who attend the school.

Professional development programs are driven by the needs of the school and are well led by the administration who have appropriate plans for future professional development, including classroom management.

Each member of the administration has a clear role linked to student grades, working with the coaches to assist instruction, managing grade conferences, and undertaking formal and informal observations. There is a clear program for observations and each teacher receives prompt and meaningful feedback. At present, there are few opportunities for peer observations, although the school plans to address this, including in its professional development program. The administrators are kept aware of the progress of the students at regular cabinet meetings and all of the situations which require intervention.

New staff are supported well and the principal is keen to empower staff to make decisions and to give them the opportunity to build up a range of experiences. This is a good example of the way in which she is building capacity.

The principal is well respected by a staff that shares her high expectations. She maintains a low-key, positive and professional manner and teachers do not want to let her down. She is extremely well liked by the students, all of whom she knows by name. One student described her as 'the brain of the body' and they like the fact that she understands them and takes care of them. The parents are equally supportive of her work for the school and acknowledge her key role in turning the school around.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

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

The principal is constantly striving for improvement and has very high expectations of her staff and students. Her staff feel empowered, and meet frequently, monitor progress and make decisions about individual students' next steps. Student groupings and schedules are kept under constant review.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is the principal means of setting and assessing the schools' goals. It is regularly used for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

The atmosphere in the school is very positive with reflection and self-review an integral part of the culture. Decision-making is supported by data and student outcomes are compared across subjects and groups. The staff are happy and confident in using up-to-date information to plan next steps.

The school has many strengths, the greatest of which are its collaborative approach to decision-making and its clear vision which it shares with staff, students, parents and the community.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Mohegan Community School (CS 067)	∅	✓	+
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