



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Dr. Marjorie H. Dunbar School
Public School 126**

**175 West 166 Street
Bronx
NY 10452**

Principal: Nadine Kee-Foster

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Reviewer: Alan Geller

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 126, the Dr. Marjorie H. Dunbar School, is located in the Bronx. It serves 804 students in grades pre-kindergarten to grade 6. There are 130 special education students who are taught in self contained and collaborative team teaching classes, while the remainder receives special education teacher support services. There are 203 English language learners which comprises 25% of the school population. These students are taught in self contained bilingual classes and also get instruction from specialist teachers. These teachers of English as a second language use a push-in model of instruction allowing students to remain in class. The school is comprised of 57% Hispanics, 36% Black and 7% Asian and other students. Attendance stands at just over 90%, this is comparable to past years, yet below that of similar schools. The school receives Title I funding.

The school partners with a community based organization, Woodycrest, which provides after school academic support. The Morrisania Health Clinic, housed in the building, provides medical support to all of the students and their families.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a focused leader who is well respected by the staff, students and parents.
- The school is making improved use of a variety of data to track student progress and to inform decision making.
- Budgeting, scheduling and staffing decisions arising from an analysis of the data now make a good contribution to developing instructional practice in the school.
- The students feel respected by all staff and trust the adults to support them.
- Student attendance, which is above 90%, is a daily priority of the school and there is immediate follow-up of any absences by involving the families.
- The principal frequently visits classrooms, this helps to promote a positive learning environment thanks to her genuine concern for the staff and the students.
- Good quality school procedures are in place ensuring that the school runs well.
- The parents are pleased with the positive impact of the new principal as she has improved instructional programs and created a safe and nurturing school.
- School wide committees and grade level teams work collaboratively to ensure a quality educational program.
- The school has high expectations for the students, resulting in focused classrooms where students work hard to succeed.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the tracking of data on a more consistent basis, to establish mastery of skills in the mathematics program.
- Provide additional opportunities for teachers to observe each other and to participate in peer and self evaluation activities.
- Continue to provide training opportunities and develop resources for staff to further differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- Further improve specific feedback to students, using rubrics, so that they know more precisely what they have to do to improve their work.
- Be more systematic in the way the school evaluate goals, revises plans and monitors and assesses the effectiveness of school plans and interventions.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Dr. Marjorie H. Dunbar School had a new administrative team assigned in September 2006. The team consisted of a principal and two assistant principals. Their arrival has brought about significant positive changes in the school. These include the improved use of data in making decisions and better organizational structures that focus on developing instructional programs. These have had a positive impact and are beginning to raise student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. The principal and assistant principals work well together and have begun to establish a professional development plan to improve teaching and learning. However, there has been insufficient time for the improvements to become fully embedded in all classes and across all grades.

The staff, students and parents value the arrival of the new team. Everyone respects the principal's genuine concern for the school community. Collaborative teams have been organized to share ideas and practices across the school. These are designed to ensure that student needs will be met. The improved data tracking that has been established means that those students in greatest need now get better access to the intervention services. Data gathered from learning walks, grade level team meetings and in classrooms has enabled the school leaders to develop a clear picture of the next steps it needs to take. The leadership team sees better communication with staff and parents about the policies and practices in the school as one of the most urgent priorities.

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 has developed a variety of ways to collect and analyze the data which teachers can then use to easily determine student levels and needs. This work is especially strong in respect to reading and writing, but is not applied as consistently in the mathematics program. The balanced literacy approach has been introduced in English language arts utilizing the workshop model. This technique provides good opportunities for teachers to gather daily performance data about students, classes and grades. School leaders and teachers can then use the data to make informed decisions as to how students can move improve and what the steps they will need to take to accomplish this. Students in the special education programs as well as English language learners are assessed utilizing the tracking tools. The resulting assessment informs decisions about the provision of resources. These decisions are based upon specific student skill needs have been discussed and evaluated and are beginning to prove effective at raising achievement.

There are still gaps in this work that the school has not yet been able to cover. For instance, there has been no analysis of data concerning students in temporary housing. This group comprises over 5% of the school population but there has been no opportunity to better understand their needs. The school does make good use of the data to get a

broader perspective; for instance, it effectively analyzes its data to determine how well its performance compares to that of similar schools. It also uses the information to compare how students achieve from one grade to the next based upon each child's past performance. Grade level teams reflect upon their practices in double period meetings. These teams focus on looking at student work samples to note exactly which strategies have the most effect in improving student work. An example of this work that led to an important instructional change occurred when students in grades kindergarten to 2 received push-in guided reading service. This focused more effectively on reading skill development than the previous approach and consequently the students' progress in reading improved.

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.

Over the past year, the school leaders developed knowledge of the school's performance through learning walks, class visits and by examining prior data on student performance. In addition they instigated meetings with all staff to determine their specific understanding of both individual students and those of different groups and backgrounds. Accurate goals for improvement were established, and, in some cases, time frames were set for implementation of improvement plans. In addition, specific professional development was planned to accomplish the goals that were set. This has encouraged a collaborative culture to become established which provides opportunities for the staff to work cooperatively to improve instructional programs. Many systems have been introduced and taken hold. These include grade level team meetings where teachers plan the next parts of the curriculum based upon student's current knowledge and skills. An important part of the mission was to set goals for individual students and classes and this has been effective. The teachers have the data shared with students and they analyze it to understand what their students know and can do. This process is reflected in the planning of the curriculum for each grade which is now allowing students to reach grade level goals.

The school has high expectations for its students as noted in the celebrations of student work on display and in their folders. Students produce work which then forms a baseline for their writing. This is used as the basis for specific improvement plans and subsequent writing instruction. In some classrooms rubrics are used and feedback is targeted more effectively towards individual students. As yet this practice is not consistent across the school. Where it is used, it clearly helps students to know what they need to do to improve their work. Parents believe that the school has high expectations and are pleased with the instructional programs that challenge their children. The parents feel valued at the school and are extremely pleased with the safe and positive culture that has been established.

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 uses the mandated curriculum in its work. This provides various assessments to track student progress and these are usually used effectively. For instance, teachers use the balanced literacy approach to create running records noting how students are progressing on a daily basis. This then allows them to target individual students and teach them the specific skills they need to progress at a faster rate. The writing program makes good use of baseline, midline and end of year assessments to note student progress throughout the year. Regular feedback is provided about the student's work by the teachers, but these suggestions are not precise enough for students to use to improve their work. The school is not as consistent in the way it tracks mathematics progress especially in relation to the mastery of skills. Good use is made of supplementary materials to enrich and strengthen these programs and improve test taking skills. Grade level teams use their weekly planning time to plan effectively for the implementation of the units of study. Teachers also differentiate their instruction by grouping children as to their skill needs and their reading level. However, the use of differentiated instruction is not well developed. The school uses classroom observations and the outcomes of student performance to evaluate the teachers. Feedback from these evaluations is beginning to improve the quality of instruction.

The school has devised challenging curriculum programs which are beginning to extend and develop the students' learning. These programs require students to work at a higher level in reading, writing and mathematics than they were previously expected to do. These higher expectations combined with additional resources and a greater focus on developing lessons based upon student needs have had a positive impact on the tone of the school and student engagement. The students feel that they are respected by the teachers. The principal models a positive attitude towards students which is being followed by the staff. Students feel that they are listened to and enjoy being with their teachers.

Student attendance is over 90% which is similar to last year. Attendance is a daily priority and students are commended for attending daily and parents are notified of absenteeism. Students take pride in having good attendance. Parents are pleased with the school and make an effort to ensure that their children attend regularly.

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 is committed to building an effective school, and has paid great attention to selecting a knowledgeable staff that is committed to the team effort. The new staff have embraced the vision of the principal and are clearly helping the school to achieve its mission. The school leaders spent a great deal of time initially learning about the needs of the staff so that they could implement an effective training program. The training program is provided in weekly common planning times, through demonstration lessons, observations and learning walks. The staff now have a better understanding of good quality instruction, and they have responded well to training. However, opportunities for

more consistent observations of teachers by their colleagues with peer and self evaluation activities are not yet well developed.

The principal visits classrooms on a daily basis and has a strong presence throughout the building. She is well respected because of her excellent knowledge of the content area and because of her willingness to share positive suggestions with the staff. Cabinet meetings and grade level meetings are now viewed as being important by all staff as they provide good opportunities for the evaluation of results and the revision of plans. For instance, interventions plans were changed when it was noted that not enough progress was being made in the reading program. Other school routines have been developed and monitored, resulting in a safe school that runs well. Successful after-school activities are helping to extend the development of students' academic skills. These take place as a result of the schools work and alignment with a community based organization.

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.

The principal and her team are actively promoting the development of the school. They are doing this by setting benchmarks to focus on developing school wide initiatives, and establishing challenging goals for improvement. They are encouraging the teachers to make intelligent use of the available data to improve their instruction. This includes monitoring and analyzing the results of assessments in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are also expected to take into account the needs of specific children. They are expected to evaluate the interventions students receive and ensure that the outcomes are shared with all key staff. The principal acknowledges that a more consistent plan to monitor goals, revise plans and assess the effectiveness of programs is the next crucial step.

At present, teachers are better at comparing and evaluating student progress within each class than they are at analyzing the outcomes across grades. In addition, although the school's systems for reviewing annual goals and determining the effectiveness of intervention programs is beginning to raise standards it is still not yet detailed enough. Consequently some students are not receiving all the support they need. Nevertheless, as teachers further analyze and discuss the data, they are becoming more skilled in planning the appropriate activities that are improving student outcomes. With the continued strong direction of the leadership team the school's outlook is positive.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Dr. Marjorie H. Dunbar School (PS 126)	∅	✓	+
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	