



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Twin Parks Upper School

Intermediate School 129

**2055 Mapes Avenue
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Yvette Beasley

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Twin Parks Upper School, Intermediate School 129 contains grades 6 through 8. It has 509 students currently enrolled. Of these, 56% are Hispanic, 43.5% are Black and the remaining .5% are Asian. A little over 18% are English language learners and 23% are special education students. Both proportions are higher than similar and City school averages. The school's current attendance figure is 89%, which is low compared with other New York schools. At 73% eligibility, Title 1 funding is average for schools of this type.

The school is organized into three separate academies called 'Scientific Discovery', 'Law, Justice and Civic Studies' and the 'Exploratory Academy'.

Intermediate School 129 is an empowerment school. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- This school is a place where students feel secure and valued.
- Parents believe that the school lays a sound foundation for adult life.
- The principal is highly respected and is an excellent role model in terms of vision, commitment and hard work.
- Senior staff support their many colleagues new to teaching well with good lesson observations and constructive advice.
- The school uses a wide range of data well to track student progress and identify problems promptly.
- There is very good planning and evaluation by teachers which takes place in well-informed and well-organized teams.
- The school successfully seeks every opportunity for students to participate and excel in a wide range of activities.
- A good professional development program supports all staff in developing skills relating to differentiating instruction, and classroom and behaviour management.
- There is good support for students for whom English and literacy skills are a problem.
- Many teachers demonstrate teaching skills of a high order.

What the school needs to improve

- Use data to further analyze and compare the performance of sub-groups within the school, particularly ethnic groupings.
- Ensure that all teachers use data about different groupings to plan differentiate instruction based on student achievement.
- Continue professional development aimed at supporting target setting by all teachers within all classes.
- Seek ways in which to recruit staff who show a commitment to use data to set high expectations for student performance.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Since 1998 student enrollment has been re-configured a number of times and has moved from being an elementary school to its current status of intermediate school. Over that same period there have been considerable improvements in the discipline regime and the picture of a school with a poor behavior record is now a thing of the past.

One reason for this is that the school has an excellent principal. She, with her senior team, has made changes to the curriculum which has resulted in a consistency of standards and student achievement. Students have benefited from the reconfiguration of the school into three separate academies. Each academy has its own identifying uniform. Additionally, a staff uniform policy has been adopted throughout the school. Parents and staff see these two major changes as contributing to the more positive attitude and sense of identity among students.

The school has recently become an empowerment school working closely with the Center for Educational Innovation - Public Education Association. This has had a very positive impact on staff and has led to the greater and more efficient use of data and professional development throughout the school. In addition, Twin Parks is now a school of choice and has been heartened by the interest shown by families well beyond the Bronx area.

While 24% of the teaching staff is new to education, the school has been able to draw on the considerable experience of other staff and administrators to support their new colleagues. It has, however, slowed the rate of progress for a school that has now put many imaginative and successful processes in place.

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 secure systems for collecting and analyzing data about student performance and progress. When students start at the school they have two days of informal assessment in English language arts and mathematics, establishing a baseline for future comparisons. The school strengthens this with teachers' own regular observations and tests. The regular item analysis of tests that the school makes means that each teacher has a clear picture of each individual student's strengths and weaknesses. On a monthly basis, data is reviewed to check whether there is a need for additional support.

As a result of this process, the school has a very clear understanding of students who need additional help with English and those for whom special education staff are the best support. The school monitors the performance levels of English language learners closely to judge how effective the specialist teaching is. Currently, there is significant evidence to

suggest that most of these students will have made one or two stages progress by the end of the academic year. The monitoring of individual education plans for special education students is equally rigorous. A similar process is undertaken to monitor students hovering between levels 3 and 4 and those who are over-aged. Scrutiny of the progress made by higher achieving students is also underway and is assisting in the setting of challenging goals.

At present the school does not feel there is value in analyzing the progress of ethnic sub-groups. This restricts the data they have available to evaluate the impact of the curriculum on all students. It also reduces the opportunity to monitor the progress of students who are newly arrived in the country, which are a small but important sub-group within the school.

The school looks carefully at its performance each year to evaluate improvements in standards. It compares individual student progress by class, grade and subject. It is keen to compare itself with others of a similar nature and successful visits have been made. However, formal comparisons are not yet fully in place.

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.

The fact that senior staff has regular access to detailed data on individual students means that they can look at progress within a class, across a grade and amongst faculty. This assists in strategic decisions, such as raising the attention given to algebra in mathematics. All faculties are represented within the cabinet which means that this work is done in a collaborative fashion and dissemination of decisions is prompt. Weekly planning meetings, together with many informal discussions allow all staff to review progress. An example of assessment results being translated into effective action was having 6th graders produce memoirs and author studies in an effort to improve reading and writing skills.

The quality and detail of the data collected for students with significant difficulties is very good and generates relevant and clearly focused discussions between subject and academic support staff. The school regularly spotlights particular groups and studies their progress. This has been effective with students who in the past have only achieved level 1 and those who have poor attendance records or whose behavior changes inexplicably. The additional attention has seen the numbers of students reaching levels 2, 3 and 4 improving. The close collaboration between all staff means that many difficulties are addressed early on.

The majority of teachers are now competent at using the assessment data, together with their own observations, to set meaningful targets for students. To do this they pay careful attention to the way classroom groups are set up and how recorded data is used when planning lessons. In one special education lesson this was done impressively when a teacher used her smartboard to display individual student performance profiles in electronic form to encourage greater interaction and effort. Additionally, parents are able to look at a range of relevant information at the regular parent-teacher conferences. For some less experienced teachers this can be a demanding task and, as a result, there is some inconsistency in planning and target setting.

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 good relationships between adults and students is a major factor in the recent improvements in morale and achievement. Most teaching engages students well. With a few exceptions, students receive very high quality teaching in all subjects. Teachers respect their students and this lays a basis for the very good personal and academic support that is given. All adults are concerned to see each student succeed and many give time outside of regular school hours to assist students with problems.

Teachers are well aware of their accountability. Regular observations, weekly scrutiny of lesson plans and one-on-one discussions with the principal and her senior staff mean that the consistency within planning, responses to behavior problems and emotional support of students continue to improve. Almost all teachers differentiate work effectively based on the data they have on students.

The curriculum is increasingly designed to ensure that mandated subjects be taught thoroughly, and that electives, such as architecture, chess, forensic science or kickboxing enrich this core. In addition, the school takes every opportunity for students to participate in activities within the community and beyond. For example, the Econ Bowl presentation team once again won the Bronx leg of a State-wide competition and will move on to the finals. As a result of this rich curriculum, all students are actively engaged in learning.

The curriculum is underpinned with a rigor that begins with senior staff. Staffing decisions have ensured that bilingual teaching has been enriched this year. The appointment of a new attendance teacher has already shown good results. There is an efficient attendance system which is valued by parents and staff alike. Careful budgeting has seen an impressive development of technology, with smartboards in every class and an increase in the laptops available to all students. Scheduling changes have assisted in the improvement in behavior by moving staff rather than students through the day.

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.

Staff, students and their families agree that the one consistent factor in the considerable progress that has been made over the past few years is the principal. She is an excellent practitioner who is highly respected by her fellow principals as well as by teachers and students. She has modeled a range of good practices which staff has emulated. She has a vision that seeks the best for her students and a rigor that means that if something is planned it will be implemented. Her regular classroom observations are detailed and helpful to all staff, as are those of her senior colleagues. Teachers new to the school attest to the value of the training and advice they have received. Similarly, more experienced staff say that it is the strength and support of the principal that has encouraged them to remain. Much of the recent professional development has concentrated on aspects of behavior and classroom management. There has also been

the opportunity to visit other schools to observe good practice. There are good opportunities for teachers to observe each other's work and professional development is differentiated to accommodate the needs of the wide variety of staff.

As far as is practically possible, staff are hired on the basis of how well they will work within the school team and how far they will be willing to go to support students together with high expectations of all students. Staff must be willing to use data effectively to create and plan meaningful targets for all students. They must also be willing to work within faculty teams and share data and planning. This happens on a daily basis and the openness of the sharing is a real strength of the school. There are regular opportunities for staff to share planning and information within grade and subject teams.

On a day-to-day basis, the school works very well. Entry and dismissal times are calm. Staff and students clearly understand all school procedures, including what to do to seek advice and support. The school makes good use of external services from Urban Advantage from work on the project-based developments within science to the partnership with Fordham Treatment Center and the Bronx-Lebanon Hospital to offer family counseling and psychiatric support.

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.

Strategic planning within the school is good. The planning cycle starts with a retreat where staff identifies what has worked this year and what needs to be done the following year. This is then refined by the cabinet and worked up in detail by the faculty and other staff. The Comprehensive Education Plan is a well-structured and practical document with clear indications of responsibilities and timelines. There are reviews throughout the year and changes are made when necessary. This is exemplified by the mid-year developments, such as the focus on algebra for grade 7 students and the higher emphasis on inference within English language arts as the result of a review of new data for students' reading skills.

Within this process, the wide range of data collected within classes, by the faculty and by the cabinet is regularly reviewed to ensure that impending problems are spotted before they become real concerns. The model of plan, do and review is one that underlies everything the school does from yearly whole-school planning to day-by-day developments by faculties and classes. It is also central to the watch that is kept on every student to ensure that a slackening of progress is identified and dealt with immediately. The principal and her cabinet have a good picture of the school. They evaluate what they are doing well. They also recognize that all assessments and observations have the potential to take a teacher, a faculty or the school forward. It is this insight that has moved the school forward over the past three years.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Name of School Twin Peaks Upper School (IS 129)	∅	✓	+
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	