



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Theodore Roosevelt Gathings Middle School

Intermediate School 158

**800 Home Street
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Marsha Elliott

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Reviewer: Leo Connolly

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school is located in the South Bronx and is in the final year of a three year phase out plan. It shares the campus with three other schools. There are 215 students all of whom are in the 8th grade, with 39 of them being special education students. Approximately 54% of the students are Hispanic, 46% Black, with 26% of the students being English language learners. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding. The number of students with Title 1 eligibility is below similar schools but above the City average. The absence rate in 2005 was above the average for the City and for similar schools. However recent data is showing an improving trend.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Providing a stable administration after years of uncertainty and insecurity.
- Providing a climate of collaboration, achievement and teamwork fostered by the principal.
- Providing a dedicated staff team committed to helping their students.
- The effective leadership of the principal is providing a clear vision, focus, rigor and drive to the work of the school.
- Teamwork at subject and inter-disciplinary level effectively supports collaborative planning and the evaluation of student's progress.
- The school has in place well developed systems and structures to support those students with the greatest needs.
- Effective support and guidance to students through the mentoring program.
- Effective strategies for improving attendance.
- It provides a safe and secure learning environment.
- An after school program that is aligned to the school curricula and is effective in meeting student's needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to use and share the data gathered from diagnostic testing in English language arts and mathematics to ensure that common weaknesses in students learning and understanding are identified and addressed.
- Develop targets for students in English language arts and mathematics for the end of each unit of work so that student progress is more accurately monitored and accelerated.
- Further develop the capacity of the teachers to analyze and use data to provide focused plans that help to 'close the gap' and meet the needs of their students.
- Use the action plans that support the school goals to ensure that progress towards the goals are kept 'on track', through a process of monitoring and reviewing.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with some undeveloped features.

This is a challenging but improving school that has many issues to address, not least of which is to maintain the current impetus and motivation to do well by the last group of students before the school closes. Though the school has had six principals in as many years the current principal, since her appointment in 2004, has developed a culture of high expectations, collaboration and teamwork. This has supported a dedicated staff team committed to their students. She has a clearly articulated vision that provides focus, rigor and drive to the work of the school. The strategies that she has put in place although in their infancy have the potential to impact significantly on student achievement.

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 with some undeveloped features.

The school recognizes that they are in the very early stages of analyzing and using data either to compare their performance with other schools or to support instruction in the classroom. In addition to the data supplied by the City and the State the school uses assessments that are directly aligned to the State standards in both English language arts and mathematics. These are particularly useful in that they give the school the ability to measure progress and target skills that need remediation. The use of these assessments in English language arts and mathematics helps to ensure that common weaknesses in learning and understanding are identified and addressed. The school has made a good start with this but it needs further development and consolidation.

The principal has put in place effective systems and structures to ensure that lessons are aligned with the data. The principal and assistant principals have worked extremely hard to ensure that the teachers receive appropriate support and professional development to maximize the impact on student progress. The administration also realizes that more professional development will be needed before all teachers are comfortable with using the outcomes of data analysis for instructional purposes.

To date little has been done to analyze the performance of students from different groups within the school, for example ethnic groups and gender or to measure performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools.

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 school has developed organizational structures that have fostered a climate of collaboration and teamwork. Teams are working at both subject level and at interdisciplinary level in developing the curriculum and assessments. The school has made great strides in establishing consistency in terms of content and learning through curriculum maps and pacing charts. The data is analyzed and teachers plan their classes accordingly, adapting content and presentation to meet the needs of the students. These team meetings also provide the opportunity for teachers to share teaching strategies and to look at alternative methods of presentation.

The assessment of an individual student’s work enables teachers to identify the next steps in his/her learning. The use of individual student conferences on a quarterly basis contributes to the setting of goals for the students so that students are clear about what their next steps are. Although the next steps are recorded in the student conference folder there is no indication of what the time frame for achievement is. Next steps are not set within a timescale that is both realistic and challenging. End of unit targets in English language arts and mathematics are not yet sufficiently developed for the students.

There is a well developed process for offering services to students with the greatest need. The pupil personnel committee meets weekly to consider referrals, make recommendations and to monitor and review individual student progress. This is supported with a ‘push-in’ ‘pull-out’ schedule where appropriate. The special education teacher support services professional liaises on a regular basis with staff about individual students in their care. In addition to this there are the well established academic intervention services. The effectiveness of these interventions can be seen in the latest annual school report which shows that special education students were the only group to make safe harbor targets in a number of areas

The school communicates clearly with parents and involves them whenever possible in their child’s education. The past history of the school has mitigated against the active involvement of parents, however, the commitment shown by the principal and her staff and her open door policy, is resulting in more and more parents becoming involved.

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 organization of classes and the scheduling of teachers are managed effectively to ensure that strong relationships are developed with individual students. There has been a legacy of poor attitudes to learning and very poor attendance that has undermined previous principals’ attempts to improve student achievement. The current principal, with the help of a dedicated and committed staff team, has managed to change this by establishing high expectations, operating a zero tolerance policy and developing a relevant curriculum. Strategies put in place to tackle attendance issues have been effective in that attendance is now close to the City average and in line with similar schools.

There is a clear focus on English language arts and mathematics supported by curriculum maps and accompanying rubrics that align with the State standards. The school has identified a need to develop further the teacher's capacity to analyze and use data effectively to provide more focused plans that meet the needs of their students.

The principal has implemented a series of conferences with individual teachers which not only supports them with the use of data driven instruction but also challenges them in terms of their proposed provision. This kind of dialogue and subsequent follow will help to ensure that expectations are clear and that there is clear accountability for student outcomes. The system of student mentoring recently established in the school means that each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.

The flexibility afforded by Title 1 finding has meant that the school has been able to respond to student need through its budget and set up a number of collaborative team teaching classes, a Columbus class for students who have been held over and provide a variety of other activities including the mentoring scheme. This has proven to be very effective in improving student engagement and motivation.

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.

Teachers are appointed to the school on the basis of their openness to learning new things and demonstrating a high capacity to grow. The principal makes her expectations very clear to all potential new appointments.

Recent professional development decisions have been prioritized by the need to implement data driven instruction thereby ensuring appropriate differentiation for all students. Staff are finding that using and analyzing data to provide focused lesson plans is hard work. However they are seeing the results of this in improved student engagement and outcomes. They appreciate the time, resources and guidance provided by the administration in supporting them with this development. Staff are actively encouraged to turnkey any training they may have received so that others may benefit. In house professional development is driven by a mixture of student needs, school needs and the results of staff surveys. The Literacy coach and the mathematics specialist also provide ongoing professional development.

The principal and her cabinet have a high profile around the school, regularly patrolling the halls and visiting classes. Staff recognize and appreciate how supportive the administration is of them and the students. Formal classroom observations are scheduled four times a year. However there are informal visits to most classrooms on a daily basis which are followed up with comments against an agreed rubric. Because the principal and the cabinet are frequently in and out of classrooms, talking with students, looking at their work, scrutinizing the classroom environment, she has good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development of her staff. Formal peer observations are not a common feature of the school though they do take place and may arise out of a formal observation.

The subject area meetings and interdisciplinary meetings are the forums where the curriculum maps and pacing charts are determined. Student data is collected in these

meetings and is used to look at strengths and weaknesses of the curricula program. Decisions about enrichment and remediation are taken and the data also provides a means of self reflection for the teacher on their own performance.

The principal sets high standards and is very successful in sharing these with staff, students and parents. She knows what she wants from her staff and her students. She is seen as a 'people person' and respected by all. The school runs smoothly, procedures are clear and students appreciate how much calmer and safer it is this year as compared to last year. Co-operation with the principals of the other schools sharing the campus ensures that potential conflicts are minimized.

The range of partners providing support to students in after school programs is closely aligned to school goals and are effective in meeting student needs.

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.

Priorities for the Comprehensive Education Plan were arrived at through an extensive collaborative exercise involving two 'retreats'. This involved a detailed discussion of data that was available at the time and resulted in long term measurable objectives. However this is not a working document in that it does not provide an ongoing point of reference for the school's work. The action plans supporting the achievement of the goals are not reviewed or revised on a regular basis. There are no interim goals and therefore there are no formal means of keeping the school 'on track' in meeting its stated goals.

Assessments of students' progress are taking place on a regular basis through a variety of means and they are discussed in a variety of forums such as the tier 3 committee, professional development meetings and subject area meetings. Plans are revised and amended and in some cases goals may even change. However there is no clear link between this process and modification of the whole school plan and teachers will not be aware of how what they do in the classroom impacts on the agreed school goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Theodore Roosevelt Gathings Middle School (IS158)	∅	✓	+
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		