



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**The Walt Disney School
Public School 160**

**4140 Hutchinson River PK E
Bronx
NY 10475**

Principal: Lori Baker

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Reviewer: Peter Williman**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 160 is a small elementary school for grades kindergarten through 5. It serves the neighborhood community but as a barrier-free school it is able to serve students with a range of disabilities and special needs and is sought after in this respect. Special education students comprise 20 % of the school roll, with the majority taught in self contained classes and collaborative team teaching classes.

Following a dip in 2004, student enrollment has grown in 2006-2007 to 546 students, partly as a result of the retention of grade 5 students. The student population is 60.8% Black and 33.1% Hispanic, with smaller groups of White students (2.6%) and Asian and other students (3.5%). Five percent of students are English language learners.

The school is not Title 1 eligible, although the proportion of students who qualify is lower than similar schools and the City average. Attendance is 93.4% which matches that of similar schools and is higher than the City average.

Built in 1972, the school is well maintained and presents a clean, bright environment. The school is rated as using 49% of potential capacity which is just over half that of similar schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school gathers a comprehensive range of data from both external and internal sources to inform instruction and student groupings.
- The student database is continually updated to ensure student progress is carefully monitored.
- The school makes good use of comparative data to test the quality of its work against similar schools and the consistency of its work internally.
- The principal, in her three years of leadership, has demonstrated significant vision and determination to set goals and bring about instructional change.
- The principal is well supported by the assistant principals and as a team they have a clear grasp of quantitative and qualitative school data.
- The school cabinet works efficiently as a collaborative body to promote school improvement and professional development.
- The Comprehensive Education Plan is a useful tool created collaboratively by a broad group of leaders, teachers and parents to enable school targets and goals to be monitored and measured.
- The school has made significant improvements to English language arts scores through its self-evaluation and subsequent modifications to curriculum.
- The school has raised achievement in mathematics to at least match that of similar schools.
- The school provides high-quality support for special education students and integrates them well so that they are valued members of a close school community.

What the school needs to improve

- Monitor student progress in relation to gender and ethnicity more closely and ensure that all groups achieve equally well.
- Develop more detailed procedures for recording information and conferencing in mathematics to inform instruction.
- Develop further the general use of technology in recording data to facilitate easier analysis and synthesis as an aid to instructional activity.
- Further develop the value of the Comprehensive Education Plan by setting more challenging targets and more rigorous success criteria to inform systematic monitoring.
- Review and extend the consistency of best practice in data analysis and articulated goal-setting across grade-level teams and subjects to inform the differentiation of instruction and assist monitoring of progress over time.
- Develop systems to monitor parental attitudes more rigorously in order to foster parents' better understanding of new curriculum initiatives.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with some well-developed features.

Public School 160 is a close community in which students are valued as individuals and prepared for life in the wider society. The school is appreciated by parents for the quality of its educational opportunities. As one parent expressed it, 'PS 160 is a public school with a private school flavor.' Students respect and have empathy for each other's situations without condescension.

The principal makes clear her high expectations and in her three years at the school has demonstrated the ability to combine strong leadership and collaborative work to bring about change. Data of all kinds is used effectively to inform instructional activities, development of curriculum programs and professional development. As a result, almost all students make substantial progress, relative to their starting level. Overall there have been very clear upturns in performance in mathematics and, even more dramatically, in English language arts. However, the school is not yet sufficiently consistent in the quality and use of data analysis across all areas of its work and does not do enough to set targets proactively at individual, grade level, and school level to allow a sharper focus on monitoring.

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 effective procedures to provide an on-going and clear overview of student performance at school, grade, and individual levels. The principal uses State and City data appropriately to rank her school relative to others and to recognize differences in performance. She also makes effective use of data to track the school's progress over time and to act accordingly. The principal and assistant principals review whole-school data thoroughly and focus their analysis on the core areas of English language arts, mathematics, social studies and science. This process is made more efficient by the clear definition of curriculum and instructional responsibilities of the two assistant principals and the resultant analysis they bring to the table.

The school generates a wide range of in-house data to provide details about student performance at grade and individual levels. Use of the School Assessment Management System combined with a range of other commercially produced tests provides grade-level teaching teams with a breadth of data, particularly in English language arts, and less so in mathematics, to inform their instruction. As this information is regularly updated and reviewed as a supplement to ongoing observation, teachers know their students' needs well. The recent initiative to hold this data collectively in assessment binders makes the tracking of individual student progress easier and also enables teachers and leaders to make comparisons of the performance of groups and classes at each grade level.

However, teachers do not use skills in the use of technology to help them sufficiently in their analysis and synthesis of quantitative data.

Great care and attention is paid to the progress of special education students, who account for 20% of the school population. In addition to their skilful observations, specialist teachers maintain detailed records to inform instruction.

There is insufficient scrutiny of the differences in performance of groups according to gender and ethnicity. There are apparent discrepancies in the progress of boys and girls and that of ethnic groups, which require further investigation to identify the underlying cause in order to take any necessary remedial action.

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 leadership team, together with the school cabinet, uses data effectively to identify development goals to improve teaching. Their success is demonstrated by the significant rate of progress in student performance in English language arts, which has outstripped that of most other schools in the district.

Parents, teachers and the administration help to formulate the Comprehensive Education Plan. The document is useful but does not include a summary for clarity in identifying interim goals and checking progress. Quantitative targets are insufficiently challenging and differentiated; for example, in mathematics, the same modest improvement is expected in all the grades identified. Interim goals are insufficiently scheduled within the plans.

The leadership team’s strategy of analyzing data comprehensively and setting out a synthesis of instructional priorities for teachers in September of the school year is a powerful tool and promotes a whole-school commitment to improving performance. This strategy is not as powerful as it could be because it does not identify detailed timelines for actions.

Teachers’ planning for day-to-day instruction of individuals and groups of students is generally of good quality. It is founded on data from assessments, conferencing with students and observations. The principal and other support professionals are regularly involved. Best practices in data analysis are inconsistently implemented across grade-level teams and not enough is done to identify challenging goals and monitor the pace of students’ progress over time, or to differentiate instruction.

Parents, particularly those with children with special needs, greatly value the lengths to which teachers go to keep them informed of their children’s progress. They know their children’s performance level. However, a significant proportion of parents have difficulty in understanding the next steps in learning because they are unfamiliar with the recent changes in the school’s curriculum and developments in instruction. The school uses clearly worded newsletters to inform parents, but the messages have not been reinforced sufficiently, nor parents’ understanding surveyed, to maintain parental commitment to new developments.

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 has undertaken significant initiatives and invested resources carefully to develop its curriculum and instructional activities to reflect the priorities implicit in its data analysis. The principal has set the pace for review and development. In collaboration with the assistant principals, she has introduced new reading and writing programs which are more explicit in setting out skill progression for student learning and also provide better data for diagnosis of student strengths and next steps. There is a strong emphasis on the transference of skills across subjects, particularly in social studies. The school is beginning to give equal attention to development of the mathematics and science content areas, which, although scores demonstrate a clear trend of improvement, have not yet shown the dramatic gains achieved in English language arts.

Curriculum development illustrates the principal’s vision for the school. The introduction of English language arts programs has been carefully staged, in the first year, to build teachers’ understanding, ownership and confidence in using the new programs before moving in the second year to focus specifically on assessment. Teachers have embraced the introduction of curriculum mapping enthusiastically for the control it gives them to adjust and amend programs to suit their students’ rates of progress. The potential of this tool to set challenges for high achieving students and the right pace for learning is just beginning to be realized. Special education students are suitably integrated to share the benefits of the changes to curriculum and are very well provided for in their own right.

Students are motivated by the new programs and enjoy the lessons of teachers who engage them in active learning. Good use is made of the computer lab but teachers have limited technology available to them in the classroom to engage students. There is mutual respect between students and teachers and a good level of support. Students want to come to school and there are good procedures to pick up any concerns over absence or lateness.

The budget is well planned to meet students’ needs, as evidenced by the introduction of the new programs outlined above. Staff are carefully deployed to make the most of strengths.

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 makes clear her high expectations and in her three years at the school has demonstrated the ability to combine strong leadership and collaborative work to bring about change and real progress in student achievement. Teacher recruitment procedures have been revised to be more rigorous and to maintain high standards in the teaching team. Professional development is given high priority in the school’s strategies to increase the rate of student progress.

Professional development is well established. Under the principal’s leadership, the cabinet reviews available student assessment and teacher performance data and designs the

professional development program accordingly. The structure of staff responsibilities provides clear chains of communication to facilitate the overview, understanding and response to teachers' professional needs to meet the schools' instructional goals. For instance, teachers may request a staff developer to model a particular kind of lesson or help in managing individual student needs. The assistant principals' analysis of data from assessments in social studies or mathematics may instigate a need for further guidance for teachers. The principal and cabinet have directed planning for the second year of the Teacher's College writing project to focus professional development on assessment strategies. This is planned to enable teachers in all grades to review the quality of their instruction and analyze the progress of students' writing more systematically.

Observation of teaching is linked to professional development. The leadership team undertakes this activity together with inputs from staff developers. Regular formal reviews are well prepared and feedback to teachers is considered rigorous and balanced. Teachers place greater value on informal observation, which also leads to valued feedback but reflects classroom instruction in a normal setting.

The principal is well respected by all constituents, and the school is calm and orderly.

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 school has a full range of assessments in place to enable the monitoring of student progress in English language arts and mathematics and to make adjustments to instructional activities. Through grade-level team meetings, teachers are able to compare and adapt their work to meet students' instructional needs. Close attention is paid at these meetings to the 'pushables' (students close to the next performance level) and 'slippables' (students who have just made the grade and may not hold their position). A missing element is the setting of mid- and long-term objectives for individual students, groups and grades to determine at what level the school expects an individual or group of students to be at a given point in time. This means that the review of progress is not sharply enough focused and interim analysis of data is not applied as well as it could be to inform flexible groupings and planning for differentiated instruction.

At whole school level, the Comprehensive Education Plan does not integrate usage of the schedule of assessments to enable interim judgments of the progress towards goals and objectives. The plan is not an ongoing point of reference to be used in a structured way to manage school improvement on a regular basis.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Walt Disney School [PS 160]	∅	✓	+
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	