



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**New Venture School**

**Middle School 219**

**3620 Third Avenue**

**Bronx**

**NY 10456**

**Principal: Dominic A. Cipollone**

**Dates of review: November 8 - 9, 2006**

**Reviewers: Colin Henderson  
and Linda Murgatroyd**

## Content of the report

### **Part 1: The School Context**

Information about the school

### **Part 2: Overview**

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

### **Part 3: Main Findings**

Overall evaluation

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

### **Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

New Venture School, MS 219, is a middle school in the Morrisania section of the Bronx. It has 530 students in grades 6 through 8. Most students are from Hispanic (50%) or Black (49%) backgrounds alongside others (1%). Over 11% are special education students and 13% are English language learners. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school opened as MS 219 after the closure of IS 148. The school is part of the Charles Drew Educational Campus which it shares with two other schools. The principal took over the school in July 2004.

Attendance levels have improved to over 88%, which almost meets the levels of similar schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- It has focused successfully on establishing a calm, orderly culture and a positive learning environment.
- Students' behavior has improved considerably in the last two years and they are keen to learn.
- The principal has a high profile around the school and provides good support for teachers and students.
- Relationships are good and students value the support and advice given by staff.
- Staff work well in grade teams, using data to check students' progress closely.
- The principal works in an effective partnership with his three assistants to monitor and improve teaching.
- The range of learning activities in the curriculum, the extended day program and extra-curricular clubs is good.
- Staff professional development contributes well to improving the school.
- The school works well with external support agencies and partners in the community to support students' development.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that teachers use data more consistently to align work to meet the wide range of students' needs.
- Develop specific learning targets, shared with students and parents, so that students know how to improve their work.
- Develop a clear and precise management plan that identifies specific goals and clearly defined action plans to show how progress towards these goals will be rigorously monitored and evaluated.
- Establish greater consistency in the school's approaches to literacy and mathematics in order to raise the proportion of students achieving Levels 3 and 4.
- Improve students' technological skills and knowledge and use them more consistently to support learning in other subjects

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a proficient school overall with some undeveloped aspects.**

Middle School 219 is an improving school. The principal has established an effective team approach. Staff have focused strongly on improving students' attitudes and behavior with dramatic results. Students are enthusiastic about their school, their behavior is mostly good, and attendance is improving. One student commented that 'Everything, every day, gets better and better!'

The staff work well together and are beginning to use data effectively to raise the proportion of students attaining the expected levels, although it is too early to show improvements in the results of City and State test results. Effective monitoring procedures are improving the quality of instruction but some teachers do not consistently use data to match activities to the full range of different learning needs. Most teachers provide good information to help students to raise their performance, although this is not effective in all classes. The school is beginning to use technology to support students' learning, although this is not sufficiently well developed.

### 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 collects a good range of data to track students' progress. A detailed schedule of daily and weekly meetings enables grade teams to review the current performance of each student and groups of students in each class. They use the data from the student achievement management system, together with other assessment data such as quizzes and writing samples, to understand what students know and to illustrate skills and concepts that have not been grasped securely. Good use of assessments at the start of each grade, supported by a monthly network assessment and other assessments help teachers to monitor progress over a longer time. Meetings with intervention teams and support staff provide data on the progress of different groups of students such as special education students and English language learner.

The analysis of data from the Princeton Review helps the school to compare its performance with other local schools. The use of data to compare the progress of different groups of students is not fully developed, for example, to compare those who are new to the school with the performance of those who have been at the school since grade 6.

Teachers use weekly student conferences to check on individual students. They make notes on each student which they use at their grade team meetings to discuss with

colleagues. These notes are not always of a consistently good quality to identify specific points for improvement.

**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 with some undeveloped aspects.**

The frequent meetings of grade teams help teachers to continually assess students’ learning. This information is used well to guide the team as they plan collaboratively for the next week’s teaching and to focus on areas of weakness. The school makes effective use of coaches and leading teachers to support their colleagues in improving these weaker aspects of students’ work. For example, a recent focus on improving how students record mathematical problems was supported by a professional development session for all staff. This was followed up by the mathematics coach attending grade team planning meetings and observing lessons, working closely with the assistant principal for the grade. As a result, students are beginning to improve this aspect of their work in mathematics. However, although they should be central to teachers’ training and planning, there is no setting of challenging goals to help students understand their next learning steps.

The school uses data to check carefully on special education students and English language learners. It identifies students who would benefit from being placed into smaller classes. Teachers plan carefully to meet the needs of these students and the school makes good use of specialist teachers, for example, bilingual teachers, to enhance their learning.

The school’s high expectations of students’ behavior, attendance, and meeting uniform requests are shared with parents and students. Most students work hard to meet them and are keen to achieve the rewards offered, such as free entry to the school’s ‘Night at the Movies’. Parents are kept well informed about what is going on in school. The involvement of parents and students in understanding what students specifically need to do to achieve the school’s high expectations of their work is not sufficiently developed.

**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 overall with some undeveloped aspects.**

The curriculum has a strong focus on literacy and numeracy, guided by the data showing that this is the most acute need. It has been enhanced by an extended day program and extra-curricular clubs that are valued greatly by students. Together with the mandated curriculum, it is aligned to school needs and supported well by such programs as Wilson and Reading 180. The school also makes good use of its guided reading program to extend students’ learning, although this is not consistently effective in each class. The efficient use of specific smaller size classes and push-in and pull-out sessions help to support special education students in their learning.

Teachers collaborate to plan the curriculum for their grade and these plans are checked carefully by the principal and his three assistants. Twice a week subject teachers in grade

teams meet with mathematics and literacy coaches to plan the teaching strategies needed to help students succeed in meeting the objectives of the monthly curriculum unit of study. Some teachers plan in detail to match activities to students' different learning needs, although the consistent use of data to align instruction to the range of students' needs is not established. Instruction ensures most students are focused on their learning task. Too few teachers actively engage students in their own learning, for example, by involving them in assessing how successful they have been in achieving the lesson objective.

The principal makes good use of budget and assessment data to align staffing with curriculum needs, for example, by appointing bilingual staff to support the learning of students in the early stages of learning English and by improving the mathematics expertise on his staff. The school is flexible in its organization to meet students' needs, for example, by creating smaller classes for special education students and encouraging staff to teach co-operatively to enable students to benefit from their subject expertise.

The principal's strong focus on attendance has established new procedures that are encouraging students to attend school. These are reflected clearly in their improving attendance and positive approach to their learning. Students enjoy school. They now feel safe and relationships throughout the school are good.

**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 well respected within the school community. Staff, parents, and students value his strong leadership, particularly the way in which he has dramatically improved student behavior and established a calm and caring tone. The school runs smoothly with well-established routines that are known and followed by all members of the school community. The principal's determination that the school will be successful provides a purposeful, positive direction and influences and encourages others in the team to contribute.

The principal works in a successful partnership with his assistant principals. They are working hard to improve the inconsistent practice that is having a negative impact on students' learning, particularly in the school's literacy and mathematics programs. They observe lessons informally every day together with formal observations, and provide detailed feedback to teachers. They focus strongly on improving the quality of instruction and follow-up visits check rigorously how teachers have dealt with any points for development from previous visits. Good support is given by coaches and leading teachers and, as a result, students' achievement is rising. Teachers work together well and many would value the opportunity of observing and supporting each other's classroom practice, but this aspect is currently undeveloped. Professional development is used as a valuable way of improving teachers' skills and knowledge to support students' learning, although it is not always linked effectively to the school's improvement goals.

The school has developed effective partnerships with a range of agencies such as the Beacon program to support learning and improve student attendance.

**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.**

School development issues in the Comprehensive Education Plan are established after discussions with staff and members of the school leadership team. This provides a detailed summary of where the school is currently and what it needs to improve. The plan lists priorities for action. However, it is not sufficiently rigorous in identifying clear and measurable goals and establishing how and when progress towards these goals will be monitored and evaluated. The plan does not currently provide a sharp enough focus on improving the school and raising student performance.

The use of data is increasingly effective in checking on student progress. Some teachers use grading rubrics in English language arts and mathematics to show students what they need to achieve at each level. This encourages students to be more responsible for their own learning by helping them to recognize what they need to achieve. However, this is not sufficiently established across the school to accelerate students' learning significantly.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: New Venture School (MS 219)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>	X		