



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Marie Curie School of Nursing and Medicine

High School 237

**120 West 231st Street
Bronx
NY 10463**

Principal: Rodney Fisher

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Reviewer: Sheldon Berman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

One of the few schools of choice in the Bronx, the Marie Curie School of Nursing and Medicine currently serves 410 students in grades 7 through 11 with a more stable population than in other schools City wide. The student population is predominantly Hispanic at 63.5%, while 32% of the students are Black, 2.9% are White and the remaining students are Asian or from other ethnic groups. The attendance rate of 91% is better than that of similar and City schools. Nine percent of the school population comprises special education students and 11% are English language learners. About 75% of the students are Title I eligible which is higher than similar and City schools. The student population is unusual in that the ratio of females to males is 9 to 1.

The school opened in 2004, and the current principal was instrumental in its creation. Most of the teachers have six or less years of teaching experience. The school shares its facility, including the gymnasium, cafeteria and auditorium, with another school, and all the classrooms are on its own floor.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The administration provides attentive management and thoughtful leadership to the day-to-day operation and longer-term planning for the school community.
- The focus on the medical services professions, with emphases on service, professionalism and academic expectation, is truly reflected in the school culture.
- The teachers are industrious and dedicated to both their students and their own professional growth.
- The professional staff displays a well-developed sense of the value of support and collegiality.
- The school has a well-developed network of professionals and community-based organizations that provide significant and continuing support to the school.
- The principal has utilized his resources well to staff and outfit the school.
- The administration and staff have responded effectively to the increasingly complex challenges of transforming a school vision into a working reality.
- The administration has provided and encouraged opportunities for professional development and dialog at the individual, grade and department levels.
- A focus on effective and respectful communications among staff and with students and parents adds significantly to a general sense of belonging to a small and caring community.

What the school needs to improve

- Pursue the analysis of data to track students' performance and progress as it relates to gender and ethnicity.
- Ensure that the schedule allows alignment of course programs offered to students with differing needs within and across the grade levels.
- Ensure that the implementation of 'accountable talk' and differentiated instruction is more appropriately targeted to specific students' understandings and needs.
- Continue to develop the use of assessment data to measure student progress and to create plans that address the needs of individual students.
- Establish clearly defined interim goals and regular monitoring of how well plans are being implemented and their effectiveness in reaching stated goals.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The leadership provided by the principal has enabled the school to make great strides in its short three-year history. Guided by a commitment to a well-defined set of values and high expectations, the administration and staff have established an effective instructional community in which the academic, social and emotional needs of students are attended to well. High expectations and quality of support encourages students to strive to succeed.

School leaders use data effectively to assess how well the school is doing. There is some good practice in using assessment to guide instruction and plan for students' next steps. Structures are in place that have begun to impact on student achievement, or are being developed, and the task is to continue this effort. The strong leadership of the principal and commitment of the staff make the school well positioned to build on its evolving systems for further improvement.

The school environment reflects a calm, professional demeanor. The medical and service themes are amplified by the scrubs worn by students and white lab coats worn by staff, and the many thematic displays in the halls and classrooms. A significant number of instructional staff have only a limited experience of teaching and many are in their first year of teaching in New York City. By necessity and desire, a culture of support and collaboration is well established.

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 gathers and analyzes a satisfactory range of data to understand the achievement levels of individual students and some groups of students, such as English language learners and special education students. This includes standardized tests scores, school-developed diagnostic testing, running records for reading and writing, and teacher in-class or end-of-unit assessments. Analysis of this data is used effectively to compare performance with similar schools and across grades, and for monitoring individual student growth. There are plans for comparing data among ethnic groups and by gender, but they have not yet been put into place. The school is currently focusing its efforts on exploring better ways of gathering and using the informal data accrued through in-class diagnostics, journals, student inventories, inquiry-based projects and accountable talk. The use of these assessment strategies are being discussed and implemented increasingly across the school.

In addition to data about academic performance, the data about the attitudinal, emotional and social strengths or limitations of students are gathered through interactions in the summer orientation, in advisory group meetings, or via special education documentation which is utilized when making scheduling and grouping decisions about students. The

advisory group structure is unique and is effectively used to support students on an individual level. Following a Youth Development Institute model, every professional staff member, including administrators, counselors and teachers, has a randomly selected group of about 15 students in a grade cohort that they meet with weekly. This group stays intact and connected to the staff member through the students' years at school, allowing a longitudinal view of each student's growth, and ensures that the progress of each student is monitored over time.

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.

Under the guidance of the principal and his cabinet, most staff are more consistently and effectively using data in working towards the collaboratively set goals and targets for improvement. Each weekly cabinet meeting includes a different selected group of teachers, ensuring that more voices are heard and that an understanding of the process is shared. In addition, weekly English language arts and mathematics meetings maintain a keen awareness of the performance of individuals, classes and targeted groups, as well as reflecting on the fit of the data and the planning. This awareness is further supported by monthly meetings for each grade level and for new teachers, as well as end of semester meetings focused on grade data. The school leadership team also meets at the end of each semester to re-evaluate the planning in terms of performance data. The impact of these efforts is that adequate support for planning and goal setting is directly related to data about student performance.

Struggling students receive additional support beyond the regular classroom instruction in the form of before and after school tutoring, Saturday support and test preparation programs, additional tutoring during advisory periods, and personal conferences with administrators, counselors, coaches and other support staff to which parents are invited. The imbalance of the gender ratio led to the development of a male support group, which, in turn, led to the creation of a female support group as well.

Rubrics and displays communicating high expectations are displayed in nearly all classrooms, often accompanied by specific examples of the excellence targeted. The school is proficient in focusing plans and efforts to provide supports for achievement of all students, accounting for individual needs and strengths. Parents are particularly happy about the attention given to their children, the direct communications they receive, and outreach for their own involvement. They are impressed with how many health-related organizations the school has tapped into, and particularly how this has generated opportunities for their children. One parent was as thrilled as his daughter that she was able to turn a lifetime interest into an internship in veterinary medicine that is even likely to lead to a job.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school effectively integrates professionalism and the medical theme into the mandated curriculum. Significant health issues from the community, such as asthma, diabetes, infectious diseases, nutrition, and hypertension are frequently used as examples in all content courses and interdisciplinary projects. For example, as a 9th grade project, students designed, organized and facilitated a Saturday health fair utilizing community health organizations and student displays. Other examples include the calculation of body mass indices or medicinal dosages in mathematics or biology classes, as well as the study of regional foods and nutrition in countries of the students' ethnic origins in social studies. As described by students themselves, the integration of medical themes into the curriculum has resulted in greater motivation for students to focus on their achievement.

The principal has been effective in using the school resources to provide personal and professional development, and to schedule appropriate programs to ensure academic progress for all students. Specific examples of this include the hiring of additional support staff and academic coaches, and providing extra instructional opportunities after school and on Saturdays. The structure of the roster is designed to maintain continuity among grade cohorts. While this serves the scheduling of teacher time well, it creates the problem that some students are moved along before being appropriately prepared in some specific content areas to meet success at the next grade level.

Teachers are becoming more effective at examining data as related to individual students, and planning instruction accordingly, though such differentiated instruction is not yet consistently practiced. In a similar way, the use of 'accountable talk' and engaging discourse is growing but not yet used consistently.

The curriculum is designed to meet the City standards while incorporating the needs exposed by standardized and school-based diagnostic tests. A host of extra support mechanisms are provided, including 'push in' and 'pull out' services for English language learners, special education students and other identified struggling students, before and after school tutoring, after school study time, credit recovery programs and summer programs.

The implementation of the advisory group has very effectively reinforced trusting relationships between staff and students, and ensures that attendance and lateness issues result in personal and immediate contact with the home. Attendance and late issues warrant response within a day, and include personal interviews, parental contact or conferences

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 has been effective in recruiting an excellent vice principal and enthusiastic teachers who share the school's service-oriented values, including mutual respect, responsibility, honesty, integrity, compassion, and generosity. These values are truly reflected in the routine interactions around the school, resulting in students feeling a strong sense of community and commitment to their education.

At the beginning of the year, each teacher sets personal professional goals in a conversation with one of the administrators. Planning for professional development has these conversations as a starting point, and is amplified by frequent informal observations

by administrators and input from coaches and teachers. The result is clearly focused decisions about professional development needs. There is a strong social support network as well, including a full time social worker, and assistance from New Visions and the Youth Development Institute to help staff plan for supporting students.

The school day begins with students greeted as they enter by the administrators, and procedures are in place to assure the smooth operation of the school. The principal projects a calm and professional demeanor that sets a tone of mutual respect that is generally present everywhere in the school.

Daily 'rounds' of informal observation by the administrators, and observations by the coaches and mentors provide information about specific instructional strengths and needs, and specific feedback is provided to help teachers be accountable.

The principal is especially respected by teachers both as an effective instructional leader as well as a spiritual leader, providing inspiration within the school and fostering connections with a wide range of highly appropriate community resources.

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 Comprehensive School Plan is developed by the school leadership team in cooperation with an advisory board that is composed of representatives of the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center as the lead partner, and others from the Lehman College Nursing Department, the Bronx Lebanon Hospital, the Jewish Home and Hospital, and the New York City Department of Health and Medical Hygiene. While the school plan is comprehensive with regard to long-term goals, the lack of interim goals does not enable regular monitoring of progress of the school's goals throughout the year in order to make timely adjustments at a strategic level.

At the end of each report card cycle, progress is evaluated and analyzed for individual students, classes, grades and identified groups. Departments meet to discuss specific students in detail, and re-evaluate the list of students requiring tutoring and other supports. At this time, student improvement as well as individual and group attendance are also recognized and celebrated. These efforts result in changes of rosters and groupings as needed for improving student performance.

The weekly cabinet meetings, frequent coaches' updates, educational intervention support team and monthly grade meetings all focus on evaluating the effects of interventions on students' progress and provide frequent and well-used opportunities for changes as required. Professional development plans are also re-evaluated on a regular basis using feedback forms that are completed after every event, so that next steps get more clearly defined.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Marie Curie School of Nursing and Medicine (HS 237)	∅	✓	+
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	