



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Dr Evelina Lopez-Antonetty Children's Literacy
Center**

**Public School 277
519 St Anns Avenue
Bronx
NY 10455**

Principal: Cheryl Tyler

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Reviewer: Jo Storrs

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Dr Evelina Lopez-Antonetty Children's Center is an elementary school in South Bronx with 552 students enrolled from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 78% Hispanic, 20% Black, 0.5% White and 0.7% American Indian students. Almost 20% of the students are English language learners with Spanish the predominant first language and 11% of the school's population are special education students with 3% taught in self-contained classes. The school is Title 1 eligible with 95% of students qualifying. This is above the average for similar schools and well above the average for City schools. In 2005 attendance was 90.4% which was below the average for similar and City schools.

The principal has been in post for since September 2006. There has been a significant turnover of teachers; with nearly half having been in the school for less than two years. To improve students' reading and writing skills, the school has a fruitful relationship with the Teachers' College, Columbia University and community-based organizations such as St Mary's Recreational Center that supports swimming classes for older students. Special programs include ballroom dancing for older students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision and high expectations for the school and every student.
- The principal and assistant principal are forming a united team focused on raising standards.
- The assistant principal makes an invaluable contribution to data analysis and scheduling.
- The recently created cabinet is actively working towards meeting the needs of every student.
- The provision of academic intervention is effective and is being refined to more closely meet the needs of students at risk.
- There has been a good start in introducing common practices in literacy.
- There are some very good examples of differentiated instruction that motivate students to learn.
- Teachers and staff know and respect students as individuals and are committed to their welfare.
- Teachers appreciate the increased availability of meaningful professional development.
- Students benefit from a core of dedicated teachers.

What the school needs to improve

- Use data more effectively across the school to set precise, numerical goals for school, grade and individual student performance.
- Make sure that the examples of very good planning and assessment are adopted by all teachers.
- Ensure all teachers use data effectively to differentiate lessons so students' needs are met.
- Use best practice to influence instruction across the school.
- Devise more rigorous practices to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Further develop strategies to involve parents, carers and guardians in their children's education.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal has been in post for five months. She has a clear vision for improvement and high expectations for the school and every student. The assistant principal is skilled at data analysis and effectively schedules teacher and student time to improve student outcomes. The principal and assistant principal are forming a strong team with the common purpose of raising students' performance. They are working very hard to develop instructional leadership and accelerate students' learning. New key appointments have been made that are contributing to improvements. These include a literacy coach and guidance counselor. The recently formed cabinet is building an overview of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Literacy was identified as requiring development so common practices have been introduced and meaningful professional development is supporting implementation. Students at risk are identified on entry to the school and receive effective support from intervention teams. Intervention practices are being refined to meet the needs of students more closely. An extended day program in literacy is boosting students' skills and a mathematics program has just started.

Nearly all teachers are enthusiastic, hard working and have high expectations. They are dedicated to improving students' achievement and there are some very good examples of differentiated instruction that motivate and engage students. Teachers and staff know and respect students as individuals and are committed to their welfare. Relationships between teachers, staff and students are excellent so students are keen to do their best. Parents involved with the school are pleased with their children's progress. In spite of the wide range of strategies used by the school to engage parents, many are not involved with their children's learning.

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.

There are appropriate systems to collect and use data at all levels across the school. The assistant principal understands and carefully analyzes State, City and school data. She works harmoniously with the new principal to monitor the performance of individuals and all groups of students, including English language learners, special education students, students at risk and those in danger of just failing to achieve a level. Comparisons are beginning to be made with similar schools, past performance and with classes, grades, different subjects and ethnic groups. Specific goals and instructional needs are established for each student and intervention and remediation programs put in place for students at risk. In September, the literacy and mathematics skills of all students are tested to provide a baseline for their learning needs and to create academic learning groups in each class.

Class teachers assess each student's performance against academic standards and review progress at weekly grade meetings. Leaders regularly attend these meetings to

check students' progress and to realign instruction when necessary. If students fall behind, the relevant data and current work are assessed in order to put support in place. Diagnostic tests are applied if problems persist to pinpoint specific obstacles to learning and to provide suitable intervention programs. The progress of special education students, English language learners and students with behavioral and emotional needs is carefully monitored at regular collaborative meetings of teachers and the academic intervention teams. Successes are identified and goals and programs adjusted when necessary. The school has started to track students at higher levels and to design suitable enrichment activities. These procedures are making a positive impact on students' progress and performance.

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 current Comprehensive Education Plan includes broad goals which make it difficult to measure success. The new principal plans to establish precise numerical school, grade and individual student goals to improve learning, boost achievement and quantify success. Parents were reluctant to become involved in the school leadership team but a full complement of parents is now poised to review goals and plans and construct the new plan in March. From an analysis of all available data, the principal and cabinet are systematically reviewing every aspect of the school's work including the performance of students in each class and subject to gain an accurate view of the school's performance. This information will be used to inform school goals for improvement. One recent initiative has been to introduce common practices in literacy supported by professional development that is beginning to raise students' reading skills. Class teachers have high expectations of students and work very hard to meet their needs. Particular attention is being given to special education students, English language learners and students whose behavior is poor during lessons and other times. Intervention teams are providing assistance through specific programs for individuals or small groups of students which are being reviewed to assess effectiveness. The administration intends to extend and refine the range of intervention strategies and programs so that students are not pulled out of lessons so much and receive more focused and coherent support in class.

The new principal has high expectations which are clearly communicated to all. Parents, careers and guardians know what is expected of their children. Students know that they must attend school, work hard, behave well and do their homework. Communication with parents is very good through a range of newsletters, programs of class-work and regular informative reports. Parents value their good relationships with most teachers who provide a clear picture of their children's progress and how parents can help at home. They are confident to discuss concerns at any time and value the efforts of the assistant principal, parent coordinator and parent/teacher president to keep them fully informed. Workshops are provided for parents and appreciated by those who attend. The principal is keen to increase the number of parents involved with their children's work.

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 curriculum meets mandated requirements and is enhanced by trips and visits that make class-based learning more meaningful. The school has adopted the workshop model in mathematics and a balanced literacy approach. Coaches and Teachers' College tutors provide valuable support that is improving instruction and students' outcomes in literacy and mathematics. There are examples of very good planning by class teachers but this is not consistent across the school. The budget, grants, Title 1 funding, staffing and all resources are linked carefully to school and students' goals and used effectively to benefit all students. Effective scheduling by the assistant principal enables flexible groupings and utilization of faculty, both of which are helping students to make good progress.

Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. Weekly goals and plans are agreed collaboratively at grade meetings and aligned daily to meet students' learning needs. Attendance at grade meetings and walkthroughs provide administration with evidence of the degree of consistency of instruction and the impact of instruction on students' learning. There are some very good examples of differentiated instruction that motivate students to learn but few opportunities for teacher to share best practice. Equally, the differentiation of instruction is not always adequately informed by current data so in those lessons students lose interest and their progress is halted. Teachers and staff know students well and students feel valued as individuals. There is mutual respect and good relationships between faculty, staff and students. Students are well supported and know who to turn to with their problems. They enjoy coming to school and find leaders, teachers and staff friendly. The school has adequate systems to improve attendance and punctuality but not all parents support the school's efforts to ensure their children attend school regularly and are punctual.

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.

Leaders, faculty and staff are carefully selected to match the requirements of the school and students' needs. The principal has begun to streamline roles and responsibilities across the school aligned to a strategic view of school and students needs. This is helping to maximize learning with, for example, the appointment of the literacy coach. Professional development is matched to school goals and individual needs and provides valuable support for the significant number of new teachers. The school's coaches are increasingly active in classrooms to support this work. Teachers are appreciative of the increased availability of professional development. Administrators regularly observe classroom teaching formally and informally and provide teachers with helpful advice to improve instruction and students' progress. Students benefit from a core of dedicated and highly effective teachers who make learning meaningful and enjoyable. Plans are being developed to share the very good instruction across the school in cross-grade discussions and inter-visitations.

Some class teachers maintain very good assessment and tracking records for individual students that accelerate their learning. This practice is gradually being shared across the school. Planning and evaluation of results occurs in a range of collaborative teams, namely the cabinet, grade and academic intervention teams. Students' progress and performance are systematically evaluated and the outcomes used to revise plans and make improvements. The principal is respected for her commitment to the school and the high standards she sets. She is effecting change for the benefit of each student. Parents

feel she is approachable and has made a good start at the school. The day-to-day organisation of the school is orderly and communications are clear. Interesting displays value students' work and projects. Teachers and staff know students well and are committed to their welfare. All youth development and support services are aligned to students' academic and personal goals. Very good partnerships with outside bodies such as the swimming classes and special programs like ballroom dancing for older students support the academic progress and personal development of students.

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 is effectively led and the evaluation of performance is helping students to learn and perform well. Teachers and staff enjoy working with students and modify students' goals and plans when necessary. Administration is building a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for further development. There are high expectations and staff are determined to provide the best possible education to meet the needs of every student successfully. Most decisions are reached collaboratively and all focus on improving learning. For example, following the recent review of students' progress and performance in mathematics, revisions are being made to planning and instruction that will be supported by appropriate professional development to accelerate learning for every student. The administration is monitoring the progress and effectiveness of goals in the current Comprehensive Education Plan and, with the new school leadership team, will set new goal to drive further improvements.

There are sound structures to review student data. Information from each student, class and grade are checked systematically by teachers, coaches and leaders. This identifies students' progress and how effectively performance has improved against stated goals and grade standards. If a student fails to make the required progress, new plans and goals are agreed, or diagnostic assessments carried out and appropriate interventions set up. Goals, plans and groupings are adjusted flexibly so students' needs are met. After-school programs to match students' needs more closely have been introduced. Helpful systems are in place for leaders, faculty and staff to monitor and share progress and intervention strategies for special education students and English language learners with students and parents. Changes are made with the agreement of parents and providers. Parents receive regular progress reports related to independent education plans and attend formal meetings with faculty and staff. They are confident to approach the school if problems arise.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Dr Evelina Lopez-Antonetty Children's Center (PS 277)	∅	✓	+
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	