



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Public School 306
40 West Tremont Avenue
New York
NY 10453**

Principal: Cynthia Riley

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Reviewer: Jill Bavin

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 306 became an elementary school this year, serving students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. There are 737 students enrolled, of whom 65% are Hispanic and 35% are Black. There is a small but growing number of new arrivals to the country from the African continent joining the school. English language learners make up 22% of the enrolment. Special education students constitute almost 12%. The school has seven classes specifically for students with special needs.

Attendance is slightly above that of similar and City-wide schools. The school receives Title 1 funding.

The school is located in a modern, spacious and airy building, over four floors, which it shares with a middle school and a District 75 school. There is no evident division between corridors or classes that delineate the boundaries of the three schools sharing the building. Several specialist rooms are shared by all three schools; these include a well-furnished library, a spacious gym, a cafeteria and an auditorium. In addition, the school has its own specialist rooms which include a well resourced computer lab, a dance studio and an art room. The organization of students' arrival and departure, as well as the shared use of rooms, demands close liaison between the principal and her colleagues in the other schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has high aspirations for every student and leads her drive for improvement with determination and compassion.
- She is highly respected by parents, students and those who work in the school.
- A culture of shared commitment and high expectations is shared by the assistant principals.
- Partnerships with other professionals and organizations are focused upon increasing the life chances for students and supporting their families.
- Students enjoy school enormously, and feel secure that all adults in school want the best for them.
- The school holds a wealth of data about students' progress and uses it extremely effectively to support student progress.
- The school makes very good use of computer technology to enrich the curriculum and motivate students.
- The curriculum is very carefully and thoughtfully aligned to meet students' needs.
- A well structured system for meetings enables staff to work regularly and constructively in teams to share information to enhance student learning.
- There is a strong program of professional development designed to meet whole school priorities.

What the school needs to improve

- Broaden the strategic use of data to ascertain progress of students within aspects across the broad curriculum and groupings.
- Extend further the use of measurable goals and timeframes to evaluate and develop the provision of all special programs.
- Develop existing good practice to ensure that staff consistently identify for students exactly what they expect of them in a lesson.
- Build on best practice to ensure that assessments and goals are consistently shared with students.
- Develop teachers' observation and evaluation skills of each other.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

In her three years in the position, the principal has steered the school through its transition from a middle school to an elementary school, while simultaneously maintaining the trust of staff and parents. The entire community recognizes that her calm, purposeful and compassionate approach has successfully increased communication with parents who are far more willing than previously to enter into a dialogue with the school. At the same time, in spite of school re-organization, the staff team has stabilized, with fewer teachers leaving each year. The principal leads a team that is far from complacent, highly committed to educating students and to contributing to school improvement.

Under this leadership, the school has a culture of teamwork, purposeful data-led activity, high-quality instruction and a commitment to high aspirations and expectations of everyone. This is communicated at every level, even including the staff dress code, and through almost every exchange. The staff provide consistently good role models to students and this contributes to a harmonious school, where students flourish in an atmosphere of mutual respect, care and concern.

Each activity throughout the school, whether the organization of a trip, an art show, a performance, a grade meeting, or the principal meeting with Morris Heights (the health center) and organizing an obesity workshop, is carefully planned and evaluated. Every exchange and activity is driven to an unusually consistent extent by the same purpose, to help students learn better.

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 well developed.

The school rigorously gathers and updates information about how well students are performing. It uses various interim tests to check each student's progress and has thoughtfully added its own questions to some tests in order to enhance the quality of data it gathers. This information is discussed thoroughly at grade level meetings, and academic goals for students are established. This good practice allows teachers to revise lesson plans which best meet students' needs. It also ensures consistent and rigorous comparisons of student performance and achievement between classrooms and grade levels. A strong feature is that the school has extended beyond the mandated subjects by compiling its own leveled rubric, which aligns with State level descriptions, to assess students' skills in technology.

The school's willingness to further develop its systems for gathering and using data is reflected in its participation in a pilot computerized program. The school is sensibly managing this new system by phasing in its use, currently focusing primarily on detailed

item analysis. Amongst other useful features, the system disaggregates data by gender and ethnicity against topics within subjects. This means the school is in a good position to enhance its existing detailed knowledge of students and its established comparisons of different groups of students by class, grade or capability with even greater analysis by topics within subjects.

The school makes regular comparisons between current and past student performance and uses City data to compare itself with similar schools. The school recognizes that some opportunities to collate information from this wealth of data, of possible relevance and usefulness, such as identifying the progress of students who are in the school longest, are missed.

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 well developed.

School leaders ensure that teachers gather detailed information about each student’s strengths and weaknesses and use this regularly to set realistic but challenging goals. Faculty make effective use of grade meetings to identify which students require extra help and to plan topics and modify introductions to lessons accordingly, to address all needs within the class. These regular meetings are key to providing all students, whatever their level, with challenging learning goals for the following period of instruction.

The assistant principals chair these meetings and provide a vital conduit to the cabinet meetings so that senior colleagues have an accurate, detailed and current understanding of how well students are doing throughout the school. Furthermore, such meetings provide opportunities for making comparisons between different groups of students as well as providing information to adjust the school’s medium- and longer-term goals very effectively. However, while most of the school’s initiatives are reviewed and revised through this process, opportunities to evaluate a minority of programs equally formally, are missed. For example, an enrichment program for students at levels 3 and 4 has begun and has been evaluated positively but informally.

Close attention is paid to setting appropriate goals for the neediest students, who receive high quality instruction and special programs that are based on a very clear understanding of their requirements. For example, special education students make good progress in understanding mathematical measurement and scientific concepts through practical and relevant activities such as making hand lotions and lip gloss.

Although some teachers share exactly with students what they are going to learn in a lesson so that they can see the bigger picture, this is not yet consistent practice. The school makes every effort to reach as many parents as possible and share with them the school’s high expectations, including the academic goals for each student. This message is strongly reinforced by the parent co-coordinator and family worker. The considerable strengths in collaboration between the principal and support workers, all of whom regularly make home visits to families, means that parents are kept fully informed about the whole school’s drive to support their children’s learning.

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 given considerable thought to planning a rich and diverse curriculum that not only meets mandated requirements but enriches students’ experience and accelerates their learning. The principal is successful in bringing grants into the school to finance curriculum enrichment programs. Arts and technology are key areas of strength. For example, the school has a flourishing partnership with Dream Yard who collaborate closely with class teachers so that art projects complement the work in the mandated subjects. Computer work, grant-funded, is tightly aligned to mathematics and science programs. The school has devised its own sequential program for work in technology that is skillfully and closely aligned to mandated subjects, especially mathematics. The school designed a rubric for assessing students’ technology performance, which is equally carefully aligned to the mandated curriculum and State level descriptors. Consequently, the program successfully enhances students’ learning and their achievement of goals in State tested subjects.

The tight link between students’ performance and instructional planning means that teachers are held closely to account for students’ learning. Information from the grade level meetings is communicated efficiently within the school, between teachers and between faculty and cabinet and so supports both differentiation in teaching and strategic planning. No staffing, budget or scheduling decision is made without consideration of its impact on students’ learning. Students rate the school highly. They know that work suits their needs well; they are happy in school and feel safe and secure. They like and respect the principal, trust the adults around them, and are confident that everyone is working for their benefit. They are very aware that attendance and punctuality matter because the school takes opportunities to reinforce their rigorous systems for helping parents get their children into school.

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 school has very good staff selection procedures which include students and current staff in the process. There is considerable and appropriate professional development available for staff. Some shared activities are offered to support whole-school goals, while other activities are planned to support the needs of individual teachers. Much consideration is given to ensuring the best value for expenditure, and this determines precisely who attends the different professional development events, always with the best possible outcome for students in mind.

The principal and assistant principals regularly observe teaching and give constructive feedback. For example, one assistant principal tracked back information from a class teacher at a grade meeting in order to focus his observation and prepare subsequent feedback for the teacher. Class teachers regularly join senior colleagues on these learning walks to extend their understanding of the requirements of students in grades before and after theirs. This provides invaluable professional development and increases the extent

to which expectations of students are well pitched. Nevertheless, teachers feed back to each other more informally than formally, and their skills in providing constructive feedback to each other are not fully developed.

There is an effective program of meetings that provides the cornerstone for one of the school's main strengths, that of good communication. Team work is evident at all levels, and the resultant decisions make a significant contribution to individual goals for students. The school provides a focal point for several community initiatives, for example, housing Morris Heights, the health center, and a science lab for the region. Because of the principal's clear and consistent focus these partnerships mean highly effective collaboration to the benefit of students. The school is well managed and procedures are well understood and practiced. The principal works effectively with the principals of the schools that share the building to ensure that students enter and exit calmly and safely. Rooms are occupied on a rotational basis and the smooth organization contributes to students' calm and purposeful behavior, their sense of safety and well-being, and security with predictable routines.

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 well developed.

This is a school that knows its priorities and its students extremely well. Much monitoring, evaluation, reflecting and revising takes place. The success of most developments is measured by the impact on students' learning through classroom observation but also unit and interim assessments as well as State test results. The school's good systems for regular and focused review and discussion provide a ready forum to achieve prompt and flexible responses. For example, staff reported that commercial tests being used did provide enough useful information about progress in the lower grades. The school was quick to institute a new running record to allow appropriate judgments to be made. While success criteria feature in most of the school's plans and are used to evaluate various programs and initiatives, this is not entirely universal. Not every goal and curriculum initiative is planned from the outset with a pre-determined way to measure success within a specified timeframe.

Enhancing students' learning and life chances is central to every school activity and the principal leads the school by providing a strong and clear role model for open communication. There is a highly effective system and timeframe for meetings that promote good communication throughout the school. This is underpinned by a culture of both collaboration and individual accountability. It is a winning formula. The challenging but realistic goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan are based upon composite data of students' performance, rather than a notional, aspirational percentage increase in test results. Discussions at meetings make constant reference to data and automatically generate debate and decisions that influence instruction and planning, as well as contact with families and other organizations as required. Each student's improvement and success is central to every aspect of the school's work and this is visible and apparent throughout the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 306 (PS 306)	∅	✓	+
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