



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Daniel Mucatel School**

**Elementary School 115**

**1500 East 92nd Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11236**

**Principal: Mitchell Pinsky**

**Dates of review: September 25, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Maggie Hollingsworth**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Daniel Mucatel School is an elementary school with 1209 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 89% Black, 4.8% Hispanic, 3.2% White and 2.6% Asian students. The student body includes 5.4% English language learners and 6.5% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 96%. The school receives Title 1 funding for 70.9% of students.

This is an Empowerment School. Empowerment Schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment Schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal leads the school very effectively, sharing his vision democratically with all members of faculty.
- The staff make very good use of data to track the achievement and progress of individuals and groups of students, including special education students, English language learners and those who are gifted and talented.
- The school functions smoothly as a collaborative community where staff work together to set suitable goals and plan interventions that support and accelerate individual learning.
- The school provides a wide range of well-targeted interventions that help students in the most need make good progress and achieve well.
- Teachers help students to make the most of lessons by carefully matching the work to their different learning needs.
- The curriculum is enriched through an extensive range of arts and other activities that develop students' strengths, increase their confidence and significantly enhance their learning.
- Professional development is a strength of the school and leads to high quality teaching and learning.
- Guidance staff and faculty use assessment wisely to judge the effectiveness of interventions and ensure that students' academic and personal goals are met.
- There is a strong culture of trust and respect between staff and students which provides for a happy and safe learning environment and accelerates student progress.
- The school has high expectations of the work and behavior of its students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Broaden the analysis of performance of different groups of students to highlight any differences between boys and girls and between different ethnic groups.
- Provide measurable, interim goals as milestones on the path to longer-term aims relating to student achievement.

## Part 3: Main findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### **Overall Evaluation**

#### **This school is well developed.**

The Daniel Mucatel School provides a stimulating and often exciting learning environment for its students. The principal is well respected by staff and loved by students for his sense of fun. Relationships within the school are very good, a strong indicator of the principal's inclusive leadership style and infectious sense of humor. Students greet him with a chorus of "Nice tie Mr Pinsky!" when he visits classrooms, reflecting his preference for flamboyant neckwear and their obvious affection for him. The school has a very well-developed program of professional development which helps teachers learn from each other. The curriculum, teaching methods and classroom organization enable students to learn quickly and securely, while having fun and enjoying lessons. Elements of the visual and performing arts and computer technology enrich the curriculum both within and outside the regular school day. They provide opportunities for students to excel in a broad range of activities, increasing their engagement with learning. Staff use assessment wisely to judge the progress of students and to work out what to do next to accelerate students' learning. The school has a firm commitment to ensuring that no student is left behind and staff have extremely high expectations of what students at all levels can achieve. While the school closely analyzes data on special education students, English language learners and gifted and talented students to check that they are achieving their potential, they have yet to turn the spotlight on the performance of boys and girls and different ethnic groups. The school has already established an inquiry team with a program of scheduled meetings and clear terms of reference.

The school has made good progress in three of the four areas for improvement identified in the last school quality review. There is an extensive database of student assessment results which teachers use to set goals for students. Their progress towards these goals is regularly monitored. Students play a part in setting their own goals, for example in reading and writing, during regular conferencing with their teachers. They know what to do to improve. The administration knows how well the school is doing and understands what needs to be done to get even better. Work on the fourth area for improvement has been partially completed but the area which relates to interim goal setting still requires work and remains a focus for improvement.

## **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 the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school has an extensive database of formal and informal assessments made by teachers. In addition to regular periodic assessments, teachers keep a portfolio of student work in literacy, math, science and social studies, including practice tests, rubrics and standards-based work, which enables them to track the students' progress over time. This is available to successive teachers at the start of each new school year and helps to get the first semester off to a flying start. In pre-kindergarten, where there is no prior information about students' achievement, the teacher is creating live portfolios by displaying the students' emergent writing on the wall. All teachers have access to an electronic database of student achievement, which they can update regularly. Teachers of pre-kindergarten to grade 3 use palmtop computers to read and update information. This initiative has been underpinned by a well-targeted and effective training program to ensure that staff are confident to use information technology routinely in their assessment of progress. Teacher-student conferencing plays an important part in monitoring students' academic and personal progress. Professional development has ensured a consistent approach which provides objective data useful for determining the next steps in teaching. The school uses the data effectively to track and compare the progress of its students with those in other schools. The achievement of special education students, including those with individual education plans, English language learners and students in the school's gifted and talented classes is monitored in depth. The school has not yet extended its monitoring of student progress to identify differences in the achievement of boys and girls, or of the school's different ethnic groups.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school prides itself in responding quickly and flexibly to each individual student's needs, regardless of level. Teachers work together in grade groups, using weekly common planning time, to set goals, plan units of study and share teaching strategies, which might be used with students at each level. This teamwork has made the most of staff expertise and helped ensure that the legacy of good teaching is continued as new staff arrive. There is regular, productive liaison between grade teachers, special education teachers and members of the academic intervention team which ensures that students do not fall through the net of support and that interventions are targeted where they should be, not duplicated. The staff use data wisely to decide which interventions are needed, and when. The school's three-tiered intervention system ensures that student progress is monitored as they receive each tier of support and their program is modified in the light of these findings. In this way, student progress is secured. A new and promising initiative to improve the consistency of goal setting across the school has just been introduced, with each grade teacher identifying three students for whom goals will be set and whose progress will be carefully mapped. Once this is fully established, the school plans to extend goal setting to all students in each class.

The school has extremely high expectations of its students and conveys these to parents through an informative handbook, parent-teacher conferences, a regular calendar of events, and notes and phone calls home. Parents are supportive of the school's culture and are pleased that their children have opportunities to learn subjects that are new and different.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is outstanding.**

The school manages its resources and staffing superbly well to ensure that the curriculum is exciting and stimulating, and targeted to the students' needs. As well as trips and visits off site, the school offers its students a broad and interesting range of activities on the school premises which enhances the mandated curriculum. Licensed teachers have been hired to teach in specialist areas such as computer technology, the arts, physical education and health. Buildings have been refurbished to provide technology and science laboratories, an art room, a pottery kiln, a dance studio and a gymnasium. This gives the students the best possible instruction and facilities to help them learn. Teaching resource rooms enable grade teachers to loan books and specialist equipment which enliven their lessons and help further engage students. Classrooms libraries are used well to encourage and support progress in reading. The extensive program of extracurricular activities enables students to learn new knowledge and skills and grow in confidence. Students enjoy the challenges that variety brings. Each year they take part in the prestigious 'Odyssey of the Mind' contest, and have consistently outperformed students from all over the United States to be placed several times in the competition final.

Students benefit from a high quality of classroom instruction in the mandated curriculum. Work is differentiated effectively, based on the teachers' knowledge of the students' needs. Lessons include individual, small group or partner work and whole class teaching, all of which help to keep students' attention and give them the opportunity to try out different ways of learning. There is a good deal of student accountable talk, all of which is underpinned by competent, consistent classroom management. The school's program for gifted and talented students in its Astral and Discovery classes is sought after by parents and students and has helped to raise expectations of what students can achieve.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is outstanding.**

The school provides a very wide range of high quality professional development. It underpins improvements in teaching and learning and is the cornerstone of curricular change, such as the school's drive to integrate arts and technology into the curriculum. Teachers are very well supported by an extensive program of training which provides them with opportunities to meet together in grade teams, with subject coaches and at whole school events. Topics are wide ranging, including the understanding and use of data, and have helped staff improve their assessment practices. New teachers have benefited greatly from a buddy system which helps them share practice with established instructional staff. There is a strong collegiality within the school, with guidance counselors and

instructional staff working together to ensure that all students' needs are met. As part of the principal's commitment to shared responsibility and delegation, staff are free to volunteer for a variety of school committees which help them prepare for leadership roles and increase their commitment to the school.

Classroom observation is freely undertaken both by administrators and teachers. Much of the observation is by themed informal lesson walkthroughs which give the principal and his administration a regular view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Staff welcome visits and act on advice given. The school is a lively yet orderly place to learn.

The school has worked hard to establish partnerships with arts organizations to support its enrichment programs. It has also bid successfully for a range of grants from arts, business and philanthropic organizations that enable it to develop and extend its programs.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school's strengths lie in monitoring and evaluating the progress of individual students. Classroom teachers are highly effective in adapting programs and planning interventions to meet students' needs. They are equally adept at using assessment to measure the effectiveness of interventions such as initiatives for gifted and talented students. Although the school collects and analyzes data about achievement for individual groups very efficiently, it does not use the data as well as it could to adapt and revise goals in its Comprehensive Education Plan. While the Plan sets clear priorities for improving student outcomes in all of the core curriculum areas and lists measurable outcomes as goals for the end of the academic year, it lacks benchmarks on which to judge interim progress. This is an area for development from the last review which has still to be dealt with in full.

The principal has a clear vision for the school's development which is shared with the whole school community. His open management style and ability to engage staff in debate about important educational issues, for example by providing extracts from academic texts for discussion at meetings, encourages educational debate and keeps minds open to educational change.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Daniel Mucatel (PS 115)</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.</b>					
<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?					X
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?					X
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?					X
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?					X
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>▷</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?					X
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?					X
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?					X
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?					X
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?					X
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>					<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>▷</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?					X
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?					X
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?					X
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?					X
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					X
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>▷</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?					X
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					<b>X</b>