



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Dyker Heights School

Intermediate School 201

**8010 12th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11228**

Principal: Madeleine Brennan

Dates of review: October 29 – 30, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Marilyn Lehmann

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Dyker Heights School is an intermediate school with 1806 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 1% Black, 18% Hispanic, 39% White and 42% Asian students. The student body includes 5.8% English language learners and 6.6% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94.6%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school is organized into three academies, each with an assistant principal in charge. A fourth assistant principal is in charge of special education. The school is oversubscribed and is currently at 150% capacity. This puts a heavy pressure on space, which places some constraints on aspects of the curriculum.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal sets the positive tone for the school and is highly respected by staff, students and parents.
- The school is very ambitious for the success of all its students and its high expectations are shared by the whole school community.
- Data is used well to understand students' performance and to track their progress.
- Students make excellent progress because they enjoy their lessons and feel safe and well cared for.
- The school makes very good provision for its talented and more highly achieving students as well as for those in greatest need of improvement.
- Teachers are very supportive of each other and collaborate very effectively to ensure that all students make the best possible progress.
- The school runs very smoothly because systems and procedures are clear, well-established and consistently implemented.
- School leaders use data extremely effectively to inform strategic decision making.
- The principal and the whole school community are constantly reflecting on their practice and seeking the best strategies for further improvement.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop goal setting to include rigorous interim goals against which to measure progress.
- Develop strategies to enable students to understand their individual goals for improvement in order to further accelerate their learning.
- Develop strategies to ensure that more students have access to enriching activities, including art and the performing arts, throughout the grades.
- Build on existing good practice to further develop the use of differentiated strategies in the classroom.

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 Dyker Heights School has an excellent reputation for enabling students to make very good progress. Many previous students have gone to prestigious high schools, and 450 of the current 600 grade 8 students have applied to specialist high schools. As a result students are very keen to attend the school and it is heavily oversubscribed. This puts pressure on staffing and scheduling and means that some elements of the curriculum, such as art and music, are not available to all students in each grade every year.

The school is organized into three academies, which successfully gives students a structured and nurturing small school environment within the large school context. Students respond well to expectations that they will behave well and achieve highly.

The principal has been at the helm of the school for many years. She sets the purposeful tone and is highly respected by staff, students and parents. She is very strongly supported by her cabinet and staff. They work very collaboratively and are honest and open about their strengths and areas for improvement.

Data is used to inform all aspects of planning. It is particularly well used to understand students' performance and to track their progress. However, interim goals against which to measure that progress are not always made explicit. Similarly, students know their long-term goals but cannot always explain the short-term targets.

Data is also used consistently to inform planning and instructional programs. Teachers constantly seek to improve learning and teaching, though not all are equally skilled at differentiating their classroom instruction.

The school has made good progress since the last quality review. It has become very proficient in identifying the difference in performance of various groups of students. There has also been an increasing emphasis on writing in math.

The school's inquiry team is well established and meets three times a week. The focus area has been agreed and the team is currently identifying specific students for the cohort.

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.

A considerable amount of student data is collected, collated and analyzed. This includes outcomes from nySTART (New York State Testing and Accountability Reporting Tool), gains reports, and standardized tests as well as ongoing teacher assessment. The data is used extremely well to understand the performance of each student and groups of students. The progress of individuals and groups is also very rigorously tracked. For

example, the school's progress report indicates that special education students have done very well. The school knows from its own data, however, that some of these students have been less successful. The school is able to identify the individual students and analyze which teaching has been most effective. Similarly, the data on English language learners, is constantly updated as they progress. The school has noted that many English language learners who test out then fail to progress at a strong enough rate. The school therefore is seeking strategies to support them further. The school maintains an equally thorough and rigorous understanding of the progress of all groups of interest.

The academy structure facilitates regular discussion and comparisons of the performance and progress of students and classes. Comparisons are frequently made between grades as well as among students, across classrooms and across subjects. Regular meetings of the local middle school principals facilitate formal and informal comparisons of progress across similar schools.

Teachers are well supported by the data specialist in their use of data to track progress and inform planning. They use data as part of their daily practice, including outcomes from their own assessments and one-to-one conferencing. They are keen to further increase their skills in using technology to manipulate data.

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.

Members of staff collaborate very effectively to set goals and develop plans for reaching them. Time frames are implicit in curriculum maps and pacing calendars, with the aim of achieving the end of year goals. Curriculum maps are varied to match the needs of different classes. These include superintendent's classes and special enrichment classes in each grade that set high expectations and provide challenging opportunities for highest achieving students. Grade 8 students, for example, can take Regents in math and earth science. As a result these students make very good progress.

The school works consistently to improve all students' levels of achievement. Students in greatest need of improvement, for example, make good progress because careful attention is paid to meeting their needs. Assessment data is constantly reviewed by the data specialist and the academic intervention service and individual education plans teachers, and used to inform planning. In addition to self-contained classes and collaborative team teaching classes, students are supported by very effective academic intervention services and resource room teachers. Individual education plans focus on the academic standards, and are regularly updated to meet the changing needs of the students. Collaborative team teachers meet together between as well as across grades to plan how best to accelerate each student's learning.

Members of the whole school community are committed to the overarching aim of "Excellence for all". The school's high expectations for itself and its students contribute to its excellent reputation, and are explicitly expressed from the moment students join the school. Students commented that teachers "want the students to graduate" and that "people want to do well to get into a good high school". The school climate is one in which any student can be moved to a more challenging group. For example English language learners can achieve a place in a superintendent's class. Many previous students have gone on to specialist high schools, and the current grade 8 students have similarly ambitious plans.

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 well developed.

The school endeavors to provide a broad and engaging curriculum. All students have physical education lessons, and all have some in-school opportunities to learn art and music. Students in the superintendent’s and special enrichment classes learn a foreign language and participate in an art, music or drama program throughout their time at the school. However, pressure on space prevents the scheduling of art and music for all students every year. This means that some students’ opportunities to develop potential talent within the regular curriculum are restricted. All students, though, are encouraged to participate in extracurricular programs, including sports and performing arts.

Teachers take their responsibility for the progress of their students very seriously. They meet regularly with the principal and frequently with the academy directors to discuss students’ performance and to analyze progress identified by the most recent data. They also constantly discuss plans and instructional programs at formal and informal teachers’ meetings. As a result lessons are very carefully planned and students enjoy their learning and want to progress.

Students experience a wide variety of activities. For example, every year students can participate in community events, subject fairs, competitions, a Shakespeare Festival, and an annual school play. Teachers use an increasing range of instructional strategies. However, not all teachers are equally skilled at differentiating their instruction. As a result some students’ needs are less well met.

Students feel safe and well cared for and say that the teachers become concerned if they are not doing as well as possible. Trust and respect is widespread. Each student has the same assistant principal, guidance counselor and social worker associated with their academy throughout their time in school. As a result students, and their parents, are able to establish excellent relationships with key members of staff

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 well developed.

Systems and procedures are clear and well established, and are consistently implemented by the whole school community. As parents explained, the principal “keeps a tight ship” and children “do not get away with things”. As a result this crowded school runs exceptionally smoothly. Attendance continues to improve. Students move around the building in a responsible way, and behavior is well managed. This engenders a purposeful learning environment in which everyone knows what is expected of them.

Teachers feel very well supported by their colleagues and by the administration. Professional development arises from formal and informal observations by the administration, from needs surveys or in response to changing learning or teaching developments. For example, use of electronic grade books is spreading because teachers are keen to develop their skills using technology to manipulate data. Teachers share good practice at department and grade meetings. Coaches co-teach, mentor and provide

demonstration lessons. Assistant principals schedule classroom intervisitation and inter-departmental conferences. Teachers continue to improve their practice because they willingly take advantage of every developmental opportunity.

New teachers quickly become confident and effective in their roles. This is because those new to the school are very strongly supported by their colleagues. Teachers new to the profession are helped and encouraged by a mentor, the coaches and the academy directors.

The principal ensures that in-school and extra-curricular services are in step with the school's goals and needs. All share the school's goals for academic excellence. In addition the school benefits from out-of-school partnerships which help enhance students' self-esteem and confidence and support their academic and personal growth very effectively. For example they provide extra-curricular programs, including music and drama, which are open to all students. They also contribute to raising students' aspirations by facilitating participation in challenging programs such as those at the New York Academy of Medicine, the Hall of Science and at the American Museum of Natural History.

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.

This year's overall goals center on reading and English language arts, with math as another key focus. These goals are known and understood by the whole school community, and plans to meet them are regularly revisited and reviewed. However, interim goals against which the school can measure its progress are not clearly defined so the school cannot accurately assess its rate of improvement. Similarly, students know their individual overall goals but these are not always broken down into short-term targets. This limits the opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning because they do not always know what steps they need to take next to achieve their goals.

School leaders use the outcomes of periodic and other diagnostic assessments extremely effectively to inform strategic decision making. For example, outcomes of assessments in English language arts since September indicate that push-in by the reading teacher has been more effective than pull-out. These findings have immediately influenced plans to improve progress in reading. Decisions on groupings of students in special enrichment and regular classes are similarly based on analysis of updated data. This means that students are placed in the class that will best enable them to progress rapidly.

The school's vision of "excellence for all" underpins its ongoing drive for improvement. The principal and the whole school community reflect constantly on their practice, and are open and responsive to every opportunity to fulfill the vision. The school leadership is tireless in its efforts to ensure that the school provides all its students with an excellent educational experience so that each student can achieve as highly as possible.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Dyker Heights School (IS 201) 

Quality Score					X
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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.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

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.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

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.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3					X	

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.

To what extent does the school . . .		Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X	

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.

To what extent do . . .		Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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 make 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
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X	