



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Montauk Educational Center

Middle School 223

**4200 16 Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11204**

Principal: Gertrude Adduci

Dates of review: November 1 - 2, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Sandra Tweddell

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Montauk Educational Center is a middle school with 722 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 11% Black, 41% Hispanic, 20% White, and 28% Asian students. The student body includes 33% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 93.6% eligibility.

It is a magnet school which is divided into three academies. The International Academy promotes awareness of other cultures. The Academy of Arts and Writers supports appreciation of the arts and the Mathematics and Science Academy promotes the use of technology.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is an experienced and well-respected leader who knows her school very well through her analysis of data.
- The administrative team fulfills their roles effectively and supports the principal very well.
- Through the effective analysis of data English language learners and special education students receive good instructional support from the school.
- Principal's and assistant principals' classroom observations effectively guide teachers in improving their instruction.
- Support services are closely targeted to guide the personal and academic development of students.
- New teachers are provided strong guidance by the comprehensive program of mentoring and peer group support.
- Effective partnerships are made with outside agencies to support students' learning.
- High achieving students in grade 8 enjoy a curriculum that prepares them well for the Regent's examination.
- The school runs smoothly as a result of strong procedures and effective behavior management protocols.

What the school needs to improve

- Involve all members of the school community in discussion that explicitly outlines the vision for the school, then broadcast the vision widely.
- Use the outcomes of the previous school improvement plan to inform the next, ensuring it includes timeframes and that it is shared and reviewed with all members of the school community.
- Develop teachers' understanding of the use of assessment to challenge all students, particularly boys and high achieving students in grades 6 and 7.
- Continue to develop ways of increasing the involvement of parents in their children's education.
- Build on the considerable good practice throughout the school to tackle some inconsistencies in teaching.

Part 3: Main findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Montauk Educational Center meets its challenges well. Students are supported effectively by caring teachers and thoughtful procedures. The principal, an experienced leader, has a good understanding of what data is showing about individuals and groups of students, and this information is used proficiently to adjust approaches to teaching and learning. The principal's and assistant principals' classroom observations inform topics for professional development. Teachers new to the school appreciate the program of formal and informal support that they receive and quickly settle in to the routines and expectations of the principal.

There are many examples of effective teaching in the school, but there are also inconsistencies. Differentiation of instruction is not consistent throughout the school. Teachers use data very well to group students, but they do not use it well enough to ensure that the work provided is moving individuals or groups of students forward in their learning. As a result, some high achieving students in grades 6 and 7 who already understand what is being taught are not sufficiently challenged. The differences in achievement between boys and girls have not been fully explored and not all teachers take account of this. A program of giving a laptop to each student has reached about a third of the school and some teachers use technology well to enhance their instruction. Staff do not always understand the school's long-term plans for development and improvement and the school vision is not always clear. The plan is not a user-friendly document and has no time frames.

Since the last review, data is broken down by individuals and by student groups and teachers are clearer about the goals for individual groups of students. Parent participation is still an area that the school is working on although numbers attending meetings to hear about children's progress have increased. The school has successfully drawn them in to open nights, as parents must come in person to receive their child's progress report. Members of staff are trying to develop other strategies to engage them more fully. Parents appreciate the safe environment in the school due to the strong promotion of discipline. The inquiry team, at an early stage, has established a focus for its work and identified a number of students who will be supported.

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 proficient.

The principal has a great deal of useful data from the State and City and this is appropriately disseminated to all teachers. Many teachers have attended a professional development course at the end of which they are given a laptop. However, not all teachers have a laptop as they have yet to complete the course. The newly appointed data specialist is starting to work with teachers to support them in their understanding of what data can tell them about individual students. However, the work is too new to judge the impact.

Special education students are assessed in a variety of ways, including diagnostic tests and classroom observations. They are provided good support through inclusion classes, push-in and pull-out intervention and collaborative teaching.

Hispanic students have been identified as underperforming so a new approach has just started to address this. Two classes in each grade are paralleled so that English language learners can be taught as a group to target their language needs more successfully. It is too soon to see the impact of this initiative, but teachers report that they now can give more specialized attention to these students and feel they are making greater gains as a result. Differences in the performance of boys and girls have not been thoroughly analyzed.

The principal looks to the school's previous results to judge improvement. There has been a steady upward trend for the past five years with results in mathematics improving at a faster rate than English language arts. The principal compares results with schools within the District, but recognizes that the school has a different population so this may not be as valid as comparing with schools with similar student populations.

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 proficient.

The instructional team, with input from teachers, draws up the restructuring plan. This plan identifies appropriate goals and has measurable outcomes, but does not have time frames. The priorities are to raise students' achievement at Levels 1 and 2 to Levels 3 and 4 and to develop the role of lead teacher for each subject. However, not all teachers are aware of these goals and, as a result, work towards these priorities is not consistent. The plan's format is not easy to use on a day-by-day basis so accessibility by all members of the school is compromised.

English language learners' progress was identified as causing concern last year and is now a focus for this year. Thoughtful strategies are being tried, such as the parallel classes referred to earlier. Additionally, in an effort to help English language learners gain confidence in their use of English they have been invited to take part in theatrical productions, such as *Oliver*. Teachers report that this effort has helped students gain confidence. English as a second language teachers are placed in content area classes to provide effective push-in support for English language learners.

Another group of students that the school has identified as an area of focus is the superintendent's class for grade 8, which effectively prepares students for the Regents examination. Yet, highest achieving students in other grades do not receive consistently challenging work.

The school conveys its high expectations of behavior very well and all students are aware of the consequences of misbehavior. The school is less effective in conveying high expectations about academic achievement. However, some expectations are shared through report cards and portfolios of students' work. These portfolios are beginning to form a good record of students' progress in writing. The school is aware that parents are reluctant to be involved in the school and is trying to encourage more active participation. For example, open nights, where parents receive their child's progress report, are now well attended.

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 proficient.

The Magnet grant is being used appropriately to write a new curriculum because analysis has shown that many students are reluctant to read. The coach and lead English language arts teacher are working with teachers to familiarize them with the new books that have just been bought to motivate students to read. It is still too early in the implementation stage to assess its impact. The three academies, although with a different focus, teach the mandated curriculum and many students also study Spanish. Assistant principals, who lead each academy, choose the electives for their academy so most students have access to a broad and engaging curriculum that includes gymnastics, physical fitness, health education, art, music and sometimes drama. The school is successful in winning competitions with other schools, particularly in chess.

Approximately one third of the students in the school have received lap tops. This provides an exciting and enriching dimension to the curriculum. Students who have laptops can readily access the internet for research and use the research to present their work.

A priority for the school is to develop reading and writing across subjects and teachers. Examples of the success of this initiative are vocabulary taught in art and science and writing in social studies. Teachers know their students well and use data to group them for instruction. However, some groupings include placing an English language learner with a native speaker of English or seating a high achieving student with a lower achieving one. In the sessions observed, neither of these groupings met the learning needs of both parties. Nonetheless, there are good teaching practices in the school. Some examples include treating students as architects and scientists, using rubrics well and planning high quality lessons. Yet, there are inconsistencies in how well teachers question students, how well boys are engaged in lessons and how successfully students' independence as learners is fostered. Student work often has comments about what the student has done well and how it can be improved, but the quality of these comments is inconsistent, so not all students have the benefit of knowing how to improve their work.

Management of behavior is good, and engenders an ethos of respect. Attendance has remained stable at around 92%, helped by visits by the attendance monitor and calls to parents if their child is ill.

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 proficient.

The instructional team observes teachers and surveys them to determine professional development needs. This leads to a range of relevant professional development workshops from which teachers can choose and where some of them take a lead. A recent survey indicated that students' response to literature was weak so a workshop is being planned. The focus this year is appropriately on differentiation, strategies for teaching English language learners and technology.

Teachers are encouraged to visit other classes and this, with cross discipline meetings and common preparation times, proficiently supports professional development. Support for new teachers is good. Mentors work alongside them, they receive support from the literacy coach and they are paired with an experienced teacher with whom they work closely. Students' academic and personal development is effectively supported by social workers and by a dean and guidance counselor for each academy as well as useful links with outside organizations, such as The Botanic Gardens. The school runs smoothly and parents are especially happy with this aspect of the school's life.

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 proficient.

The school's main school improvement plan is the restructuring plan. This is a useful document which echoes the themes in the Comprehensive Education Plan. It identifies appropriate priorities and has measurable outcomes for students and teachers, but no interim goals or timeframes. While the school has satisfactory systems in place to review the progress of its priorities on a yearly basis, the absence of interim goals does not lend itself to flexible readjustment during the course of the year. Teachers receive the document towards the end of the year. At this time they reflect on their work of the past year in groups, such as subject groups, supported by a member of the instructional team. Not all teachers are involved in its evaluation or the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning which would help them gain a clearer idea of the school's vision.

Many assessments are undertaken and these are now available through computer technology. The teachers who have laptops and access to the technology are clear about which students are doing well and which need support. Many initiatives arising from the analysis of data have been put into place, but it is too soon to see the impact of these upon achievement. The principal has correctly identified that self evaluation by teachers is a priority, but it is also too early to judge the impact of this upon the work of the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Montauk Educational Center	△	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			X		

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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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	➤	✓	+	◇
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 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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X		