



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Meyer Levin School

Middle School 285

**5909 Beverly Road
Brooklyn
NY 11203**

Principal: Edward Gentile

Dates of review: October 1 - 3, 2007

Reviewer: Ronnie Solow

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Meyer Levin is a middle school with 1038 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 95% Black, 4% Hispanic and a small number of other students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93%. The school does not receive Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The administration is a knowledgeable, supportive team led by an inspiring principal.
- Data is gathered and used to improve academic outcomes for the students.
- A wide array of arts classes and activities provide many opportunities for creativity and self-expression.
- Budget, staffing and scheduling decisions are based on, and support, student needs.
- High expectations are made explicit by rubrics, student work samples, bulletin board exhibits and student portfolios.
- Professional development meets the needs of staff growth and development and supports improved student outcomes.
- Students are actively engaged and challenged in their learning.
- The staff work collaboratively in teams to support and assist one another across grades and departments.
- Assistant principals and deans of discipline move through the grades with their students to know them better and to monitor personal and academic growth.
- Partnerships provide many additional resources and learning opportunities for the staff and students.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the range of activities to improve performance outcomes for Hispanic and special education groups in the school.
- Put in place alternative approaches to observation for skilled senior teachers.
- Provide additional outreach to expand parental involvement in the school life of their students.

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.

Meyer Levin School is a high-performing school that provides a wide range of activities to support a rigorous and challenging academic environment. Programs for gifted and talented students provide an accelerated curriculum resulting in many admissions to talent, specialized and private preparatory high schools. In order to know the students better, the assistant principals and deans move through the grades with their students. The staff's analytical skills in data analysis provide the basis for understanding the needs of the student body.

The unique six-day class schedule allows for the excellent performing arts program in instrumental and choral music, drama and fine arts. An international travel program connects the classroom to the real world. Students make good connections between their second language and the culture of the visited country. The principal's open-door policy actively encourages parents to participate in the school. However, parental involvement is not at the desired level.

The needs of the small Hispanic population and special education students still need to be addressed to ensure adequate academic progress. Skilled senior staff are not sufficiently involved in tackling this issue

The principal and the very committed staff have addressed the issues identified in the previous Quality Review. As a result, the English language arts results for eighth grade males rose significantly, the use of technology has increased and measurable outcomes for plans are currently being used. The inquiry team is formed and working.

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 uses a variety of data, including State, City and informal sources, to examine the performance outcomes of all students. The school data specialist, a member of the inquiry team, provides excellent data information to each staff member in order to provide a realistic picture of the strengths and areas of need across classes and grades. The staff's good analysis of formal and informal data enables the teachers to formulate appropriate plans to meet the needs of the student body. Current analysis of data outcomes illustrates the need to address performance outcomes and instruction for the

small Hispanic population and the special education students in the school. The principal recognizes that an alternative to the formal observation program for some skilled senior teachers could take on this challenge.

The analysis of data for different groups is well used to provide teachers with good tools for understanding the performance of their students. The principal has articulated the importance of the use of formal and informal data sources. These enable teachers to form appropriate flexible instructional groups based on objective measures of student performance. Analysis of student, class, grade and subject area results provides the staff with an accurate picture of student progress. Assessments are further analyzed by gender, ethnicity, English language learners and special education students. Areas that require redress are identified for improvement and intervention plans are implemented. Trends that indicate success are applauded. Those that indicate weakness are addressed.

The principal makes good comparisons with other schools in his network, the district and with similar schools across the city. Information gathered at these meetings helps to inform decisions about teaching and learning. This school consistently out-performs other district middle schools.

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.

Effective analysis of data from many sources is used to plan for the students’ continuing education. The Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal’s goals and objectives are the foundation for the rigorous educational program. Measurable targets are specified in the core curriculum areas and result in the development of the good curriculum maps and pacing calendars. Student work samples and classroom tests, along with the results of formal examinations, serve as the link to decisions about grouping and to the setting of challenging instructional goals. Students conference with their teachers to set meaningful goals, review progress and identify areas of need. Rubrics and high-quality student work samples are exhibited in classrooms and halls throughout the building and serve as examples of excellence.

English language learners, special education students and students identified as being at risk of academic failure receive regular interventions, through the extended day program, academic intervention services, special education teacher support services, pull-out or push-in classes or in a self-contained class settings. This support has not always resulted in improved progress for Hispanic and special education students. Additional support for struggling students is provided within the school program.

Parents receive information in a variety of ways. Formal meetings such as orientation sessions, report card distribution, parent-teacher conferences and open school activities encourage parents to come into the school. Parents are welcomed to contact staff if they have a concern. One parent stated, “I have never seen the principal’s door closed. He is always available to speak with a parent.” Parents regularly receive good quality progress information through periodic progress reports. Contact is also maintained through the use of telephone calls, e-mail messages, and workshop invitations from the parent coordinator. However, the level of parental contact with the school is limited, with parents not always confident enough to make an initial approach. Additional strategies to increase parent

involvement are being put in place in order to better educate all students in the school and share high performance expectations.

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 core curriculum follows the State and City mandates and includes 90-minute instructional blocks in English language arts and math. All classes, including science and social studies, utilize the workshop model with flexible instructional groups and differentiated strategies. In the English language arts classes, in addition to leveled libraries, a new literature anthology is being used. The study of the French or Spanish language, the arts, technology classes and physical education classes are integral components of the instructional program. All classes effectively support learning and student needs through differentiated learning strategies and materials.

Teachers are accountable for providing engaging, challenging lessons in a supportive environment. They are willing to assist students during their non-teaching time in order to provide extra help. One student stated, “The teachers will let you eat lunch with them so they can help you with a problem.” Formal and informal classroom data is rigorously examined to reveal trends for classes and individual students. Teachers then make appropriate adjustments in their lessons to address the revealed needs. Teachers and students set academic goals collaboratively at conferencing sessions. Flexible instructional groups are the result of thorough data analysis and conferencing notes.

Budget, staffing and scheduling decisions are based on student needs and target the classroom and instructional support. The six-day school schedule allows the excellent music and art program to flourish in accordance with the academic mandates. Creative use of the budget enables the school to maintain the full complement of its experienced staff.

To support a good learning environment, all students wear the school uniform. Guidance staff, deans of discipline, and assistant principals provide effective support services for all students. The peer mediation and conflict resolution programs, the eighth grade boys mentoring program and other activities provide additional support for the social and emotional development of the students. Good attendance and lateness monitoring procedures are in place.

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.

A wide range of professional development activities are well established. The administrative team visits classes daily and provides good formal and informal feed back in a timely fashion. Teachers are encouraged to share best practices. Demonstration lessons, conducted by the principal, assistant principals or coaches, are an integral part of the professional development program. At this time, tenured teachers are not offered additional self-selected opportunities to enlarge their skills through participation in an

alternative choice to formal observation, for example exchanging classroom visits with a particular focus agreed by two teachers. The principal recognizes that an alternative to formal observation option can broaden staff understanding of good instructional practice and provide the school with good additional resources.

Professional development opportunities offered through the district, the City, the network and other organizations are capitalized upon. Staff are encouraged to attend and share the information at weekly grade and subject team meetings, as well as faculty conferences. These meetings serve as good opportunities to plan and share effective practices across classes. The math and literacy coaches provide good targeted assistance and additional training in differentiating instruction and other elements of the instructional program. They provide mini-lessons or co-teach with the classroom teacher.

Very effective youth development structures are in place. There is a school-based support team, English as a second language teacher and special education support teacher, guidance staff, deans and good student development programs. After-school and Saturday programs encourage participation in healthy life-style activities. The Sports and Arts program, Dell Techknow, and the eighth grade boys mentoring activities through the New Deeper Life Church are all examples of supportive school partnerships. Time-Warner, through DC Comics, provides some financial support for projects that enhance the social and emotional growth and development of the students.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal's goals and objectives include measurable and regularly scheduled reviews of targets in all core curriculum areas. Good systems are in place for monitoring and evaluating the progress of the school towards meeting the final and interim goals outlined in the action plans. Review of school data is an ongoing process and serves as the measure of progress. The inquiry team, composed of the cabinet and the data specialist, meet regularly to examine the performance outcomes and plan the next successive steps.

Grade and subject-area teams discuss student progress and identify areas of strength and weakness. Appropriate revisions are made to the curriculum maps and pacing calendars in accordance with the revealed information. End of year scrutiny highlights the areas for further goal setting and planning for the coming year. The consequent action plan builds on the successes and addresses the revealed needs through improvement planning.

The principal and the school community have a clear vision regarding the future development of their school. The school leadership team, with full representation of the community, has outlined an action plan aimed at ensuring continued academic and artistic success and high expectations for all students at their school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Meyer Levin School	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 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	