



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Mary McLeod Bethune Academy

Elementary-Middle School 394

**188 Rochester Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11213**

Principal: Ms Claudette Murray

Dates of review: Jan 31 - Feb 1, 2008

Lead Reviewer: John Cassidy

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Mary McLeod Bethune Academy is an elementary-middle school with 737 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 93% Black, 5% Hispanic, and less than 1% American Indian, White, and Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 5.8% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94.16%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 92.6% eligibility.

Mary McLeod Bethune Academy has built up from a school with only pre-kindergarten and grade 6 students in 2000 to becoming a full pre-kindergarten through grade 8 school in 2006.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is an excellent leader who inspires confidence and motivates her staff to continuously improve the learning experiences for all students.
- There is a strong collaborative culture in which school staff, support services and external partners work together to respond to the needs of all students.
- Excellent partnerships with a range of agencies and organizations enhance the curriculum and support planning for improvement
- Students respond positively to the school's safe, welcoming learning environment.
- A wide range of data on students' progress and achievement is used very effectively to set challenging learning goals for most students at all stages.
- Professional development effectively addresses the needs of individuals and supports the achievement of whole school improvement goals.
- The school provides a balanced, stimulating curriculum which supports students at all levels to achieve their learning goals.
- The school values each student as an individual, celebrates their achievements and promotes positive relationships and mutual respect.
- The school leaders and all staff share a common commitment to promoting high expectations for students' achievements.
- The school successfully engages parents through a range of imaginative and supportive activities and communications.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine and improve strategies to accelerate the learning of the highest performing students.
- Produce a clear policy and guidelines on a whole school approach to monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance with measurable interim goals
- Integrate arts subjects fully into the core curriculum.
- Further develop teachers' skills in using data continuously to align the curriculum, instruction and assessment to match the best practice found in the school.

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 principal is an excellent leader who inspires confidence and motivates her staff to do all they can to improve the learning experiences for all students. School leaders very effectively promote, support and lead the staff in the use of data to monitor and revise students' performance and progress. The school values each student as an individual, celebrates their achievements and promotes positive relationships, mutual respect and high expectations of their performance. Since the previous Quality Review, good efforts have been made in improving the quality of instruction by introducing greater differentiation to meet the needs of students. The principal and staff plan and set goals "to keep what matters in sight" for individual students. The maintenance of detailed academic performance and personal development data by all those involved with an individual student ensures that goal setting is well informed and reliable. The school's inquiry team is moving forward on a well-planned action research project focused on accelerating the progress of a group of 18 of the lowest performing grade 7 students. However, an increased focus on refining strategies to accelerate the learning of the highest performing students has only recently been established.

Planning for student learning along with school and individual goal setting are supported by a spreadsheet produced by the school which brings together the external test scores, proficiency ratings, performance levels, gain reports, item skills scores and trend indicators for all students at each grade. A clear policy and guidelines are now required on a whole school approach to monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance to maximize the use this comprehensive data source.

In the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten department, the development of the curriculum, active learning approaches and assessments which respond very effectively to student needs have been formally recognized by the City as outstanding. Professional development has not yet built on this good practice to develop skills in using data continuously to align the curriculum, instruction and assessment across the school.

Communications with parents by letter, phone calls, visits, workshops, special programmes or one-to one discussions consistently inform parents about students' performance, progress and welfare. The strong partnership with parents encourages and motivates students and parents to work together and reach for higher levels of success.

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.

School leaders and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to gathering, generating and using data to enhance students' progress. Performance data is managed well and communicated effectively to staff, parents and students. Teachers use summary data on the performance and progress of their class, the classes of other teachers and the overall school performance to review their own performance. Staff drill down into performance data from the State and City to levels which provide detailed information on individuals and identified groups. The staff use skills and item analyses effectively to plan instruction and interventions in learning for grades, classes, groups and individual students.

Individual teachers and development groups use the comprehensive database produced by the school very effectively to obtain data on the performance of specific groups of students across grades. Data on the performance and progress of special education students, gender groups, English language learners and the lowest performing students is used to set and revise learning goals. Clear, measurable, interim goals are required in action plans for students from ethnic groups, whose performance is slipping or requires to be accelerated particularly in the middle school. The school's data specialist provides effective in-school professional development for staff. His ceaseless efforts to seek smarter, more efficient ways of accessing, presenting and using data are valued and used by teachers in supporting and accelerating students' learning. The principal downloads the performances of similar schools in the district and charts the place of the school in relation to these. This is shared with the cabinet and subject coaches and provides a backdrop to the setting of whole school goals.

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

Item and skills analyses, gains reports, performance proficiency ratings and trends in the performances of individual students over a number of years are used effectively to set and review goals. Teachers' assessment binders include reviews of gains and losses in performance for individual students, class groups and grade cohorts. Assistant principals monitor and maintain conference notes on the assessments and progress of all students in the grades for which they have responsibility. Instruction for higher performing students is now becoming more effectively focused as a result of careful use of item and skills analyses data to identify appropriate extension and enrichment learning activities. The school has not yet established a consistent approach in the strategies in use at all grades and in all subjects to accelerate the learning of the highest achieving students.

Well-established collaborative approaches increase the reliability in planning the next steps in students' learning. Meetings of teachers across grades discuss the progress of individual students prior to promotions and the shared data is used to plan next steps in learning. Academic intervention services staff are skilled in using data to develop and revise the intervention plans for individual students. Students, teachers and parents comment on the positive impact on both the students' academic and personal development which results from this additional support.

Parents receive details of their child's current performance and their performance history across all subjects. Good support is provided by the school to enable parents to benefit from workshops to help them understand and use the data with their children. Each student, in addition to regular feedback on interim and State tests, receives a personal

letter from the principal detailing their performance on specific skills in English language arts and math. This good practice provides motivation and communicates expectations of high performance to the students and to their parents.

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.

Collaborative curriculum planning uses school, class and grade data to review the content and structure of the curriculum. Block programming for literacy, math, science and social studies facilitates labs, special projects and maximizes the time available for learning. However, arts activities are not yet fully integrated into the core curriculum. Cross grade conferences ensure continuity and progression in learning for individual students. Visits to classes by learning support organization subject specialists, school coaches and assistant principals are effective in promoting improvements in practice. Differentiated, motivating instruction using the workshop model is evident in classes. Opportunities are provided for students to take increased responsibility for their learning.

Differentiation is provided through more refined use of skills and item analyses, more accurately targeted interventions, increasing use of electronic resources, more flexible class groupings and access to a wider range of resources to support individual education plans and project work. The school has identified that professional development is required to further develop teachers' skills in using data to continuously align the curriculum, instruction and assessment. This alignment is consistently achieved in the early years classes where the curriculum is planned to be responsive to students' individual needs. It engages the youngest students very effectively in developing social skills, active learning and taking responsibility for their learning. Conference and observation notes on individual children ensure instructional approaches are rigorously reviewed. Day-to-day planning aligns the curriculum and assessment to meet the needs of individuals and identified groups of children.

The scheduling of intervention services for an hour a day from 8.00am for four days of the week for every class helps ensure that individuals and groups of students receive additional academic support. This approach has a positive impact on students' progress which is welcomed by staff and students. The after-school program for special education students has been successful in raising achievement for this group of students. The Honoring Performance program provides incentives which have been effective in motivating and accelerating the learning of students in grades 4 and 7.

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.

The principal makes major contributions to sustaining the culture of mutual respect and support. She leads the school's commitment to continuous improvement. The responsibilities which teachers willingly accept, including undertaking cross grade teaching, establishing classroom lab sites or taking on the role of lead teacher, make a significant contribution to establishing a strong learning community. Individual members of staff readily share their expertise with colleagues at common preparation time, at

faculty meetings and in development groups and collaborative projects. Teachers with subject expertise work closely with class teachers to identify opportunities for the integration of subjects and to model and share good practice. Teachers readily pair up with colleagues in other grades to plan continuity and progression in the learning of individual students as they are promoted particularly from elementary to middle school. Subject coaches for grades 3 through 8 in English language arts and math add value to the work of grade teams by analyzing performance data, demonstrating learning and teaching approaches and providing advice on appropriate resources.

A teacher from each grade has been identified by the principal as a lead teacher for that grade. The lead teachers' classrooms have become well-used sites for demonstration lessons and visits from colleagues. Formal and informal visits by the administration team have a strong positive influence on improving teachers' classroom organization and instruction. Constructive, detailed feedback focuses on strengths and areas for development. It is also used to identify changes in practice and professional development needs. Valuable opportunities for inter-visitations are supported by school leaders and result in the dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching.

New York University provides a successful after school programme. This is designed to help parents of the youngest students to work with their children to help ensure that there are no major behaviour problems as they move on in their school life. External partnerships also enhance the curriculum and student motivation. In particular, the "Urban Advantage" programme links the school with various museums. "Project Green" involves links with Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

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 and its stakeholders share a clear vision that drives change and continuous improvement. A dynamic learning environment has been established in which staff and students are both learners. Members of the administration and faculty are reflective practitioners. They make effective use of data as individuals and in collaborative teams to monitor and revise the performance of students, their own performance and the overall performance of the school. Decisions on future strategies and the setting of whole school goals are soundly based on this broad array of data. Goals which are set for individual students are regularly revised by grade teams using data from conference notes, observations, inputs from coaches, evaluations of intervention plans and discussions of individual students. Increasingly, to support students' progress in specific aspects of learning and to set interim goals, teachers are using online resources to produce their own more focused assessments. As a result, students and their parents are regularly updated on the outcomes of interim tests and overall progress made towards achieving academic and personal goals.

Information is gathered from the wide range of quality assurance activities including the sampling of student work, classroom visits, evaluation of professional development and feedback from parents. This is not yet fully collated and used in a planned, systematic way by the administration over the school year to review progress on broader goals and to set measurable interim goals. Without a clear policy and guidelines on a whole school approach to monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance it will be difficult to take school improvement planning to the next level.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Mary McLeod Bethune Academy

Quality Score

Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
			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 . . .

	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 rigorous, 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 and tardiness?				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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				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	

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped