



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

John Melser Charrette School

Elementary School 003

**490 Hudson Street
New York
NY 10014**

Principal: Lisa Siegman

Dates of review: November 27 - 28, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Joy Stopher

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

Overall evaluation

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John Melser Charrette School is an elementary school with 585 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 12% Black, 17% Hispanic, 54% White, and 9% Asian and other students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.2%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school shares the building with a middle school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principal are highly regarded for their detailed knowledge of the needs of each teacher and each student
- The school offers an exceptionally rich curriculum.
- There is a high level of collaboration and mutual support amongst adults in the school.
- A flexible approach to curriculum planning encourages teachers' creativity and results in a high level of student engagement.
- There is a strong sense of community and a supportive climate for learning based on trust and respect.
- Everyone has very high expectations of students and of each other.
- Parents are very actively involved in their children's education.
- Students are independent learners who are encouraged to think for themselves.
- Staffing and scheduling decisions are made collaboratively to meet the needs of students.
- The school collects and makes use of a considerable amount of qualitative data to understand student progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the use of technology to share information more efficiently.
- Develop cross-grade team working beyond literacy and math.
- Explore ways to increase the already high level of partnerships with outside organizations to try to attract more funding for development.

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 .

You may not run in the hallways of the John Melser Charrette School but you may skip! Most likely, you will want to. The school provides a very rich curriculum, taught by talented and creative teachers resulting in students who love learning and are fully engaged in their lessons. The level of parental involvement is exceptionally high and the school is very much a part of its community. Since its inception in the 1970s, the school community has had a clear vision of an education that recognizes individuality and provides an environment in which children can become confident, self-motivated, independent thinkers and learners. The principal and assistant principal have strived to develop this by encouraging a climate of collaboration and mutual support to make sure that the school meets the needs of its students. They are highly regarded and have a detailed knowledge of each student, which they use as the basis of whole school improvement. The school collects an extensive range of qualitative data from many sources to understand student progress and make strategic decisions to support learning. There is now recognition of the need to extend the use of technology to share this information and other data more efficiently. The inquiry team meets on a regular basis and is using and developing a range of data to evaluate ways in which they can improve the performance of the focus group.

There are some very strong partnerships, which support learning and enrich the curriculum. Parents are very active in providing financial support to help the school realize its goals. However, there is a growing awareness of the potential of partnerships with outside organizations to attract additional funding to enhance and support future developments.

Since the last Quality Review, there has been a greater understanding of the links between interim and long-term goals, the development of a common language and more common planning of units of study. Teachers constantly share ideas and best practice and have seen the positive benefits of working in cross grade teams to bring about improvement in literacy and math. The school intends to develop this further. Attendance and punctuality have improved and very effective steps have been taken to involve students in more self-assessment.

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.

What the school describes as “kid watching” and a very detailed and regular analysis of student work are two of the ways in which data is gathered to understand and monitor student progress and plan for improvement. Open door policies and the very active involvement of administration and coaches in finding out what happens in every lesson have resulted in an extensive database of qualitative data. Like many schools, senior leaders are putting in systems to help them understand and use the recently developed systems such as ARIS. The guiding question used in all aspects of the school's work is “Does it make sense, is it useful?”. There is now a growing understanding of the need to extend the use of technology to share this vast quantity of information more efficiently.

The school has a very good understanding of what students can do and the progress they are making. In addition to a range of testing data and use of ECLAS running records, the school has developed school-wide portfolios of student work to monitor progress over time. Increased meeting time supports the collection and analysis of data from student work and students are becoming more involved in assessing their own work. Individual teachers play a large role in the identification of special education students and therefore have a stake in ensuring effective tracking. A relatively new appointment of staff developer and data manager is adding capacity and enabling the school to increase its expertise in this area of its work.

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

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

The extent to which all members of the community understand whole school goals and have high expectations of each other is remarkable and a very distinctive part of the school's success. Collaboration is evident at many levels and has the highest importance in ensuring the commitment and involvement of a highly creative and independent staff. Goal setting is very collaborative and strongly influenced by observational data. ECLAS assessment and student work, for example, showed that encoding was not as developed as decoding and was a whole school goal for improvement. Following further analysis and discussion, teachers identified different strategies for grade levels and classrooms. The school provides very effective support for students most in need of improvement through frequent and collegial conversations underpinned by an open door policy. The principal, assistant principal, coaches and guidance teams are actively involved with teachers in discussion of observations, concerns and ideas.

A large number of parents are very active partners in their children's learning. This partnership ranges from funding the teaching of music, art and ceramics, running the after school program, working with staff to develop the curriculum and volunteering to

help in the classrooms. Mothers and fathers can be seen on the carpet in kindergarten sharing a book with their child and signing up to act as a “mystery reader” in their child’s classroom. Teachers provide information about the curriculum and details of how parents can help support their child. Students know what they need to do to improve and are increasingly involved in self-assessment. As part of the process of learning math combinations they have envelopes containing “combinations I know” and combinations I work on”, for example.

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

This area of the school’s work is outstanding.

This aspect of the school’s work is a major strength. Student engagement is very high due to the breadth of the curriculum and the creative and individual ways in which teachers bring their instruction to life. Students are encouraged to be active and independent learners, to problem solve and to work together. They are valued as individuals. Teachers generate their curriculum in groups and have a very high degree of flexibility to use their own talents and skills. Coaches are very active in supporting the implementation of curricular approaches such as the new math curriculum and helping teachers meet the needs of their students. Hands-on learning is an essential feature of the school’s curriculum. There is a rich variety of visits to support first hand learning such as those to the Bronx Zoo, Jamaica Bay and a parent’s mosaic studio. Students have a wide range of activities including swimming lessons, computers, music, art, ceramics and dance workshops and are very appreciative and enthusiastic learners. Enrichment continues in the after school program through activities such as architecture, French, Spanish, gym, Japanese culture and hip-hop where younger and older students have chance to be together. The richness of the curriculum is highly valued by the whole school community and a parent commented that children get a “strong sense of their place in the world”.

The organization of classes and the way in which they are determined is an excellent example of the creative and collaborative approach to strategic decision-making. This has a real impact on student learning and teachers’ ability to meet the needs of individual students. The school arranges mixed age classes, for example, kindergarten/grade 1 and grades 2/3 so that students stay with their teacher for two years. Routines and classroom organization become easier to establish because half the class have already implemented them for a year. Teachers meet to decide which class “their students” should move to next based on their understanding of what is best for the individual and which teacher is able to offer most at the next stage of development.

The school is not complacent and is constantly seeking ways in which to improve such as by making sure that it shares all information efficiently to help teachers deliver the highest quality instruction. Attendance and punctuality have improved significantly and good systems are in place to ensure rigorous monitoring.

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 school is highly sensitive to nurturing the individual talents and strengths of its teachers so that they can make a full contribution to achieving the schools goals and improving student achievement as measured by the whole development of a child. Administration has a very thorough knowledge of their teachers and put professional development at the top of their agenda for bringing about improvement in student learning. They are skilled in taking into account where teachers are in their career and what may best motivate and engage them. The literacy coach and administrators preview Teachers' College literacy workshops to decide the most appropriate training for individual staff and share calendars with teachers. A designated mentor provides good support for new teachers and the school supplements this with additional support from coaches and experienced teachers. All teachers have opportunities to share best practice and their areas of strength and expertise at grade meetings and staff meetings. The school has introduced very effective cross-grade team working in literacy and math and now intend to extend this to other areas of the curriculum.

The school has a very strong range of community partnerships, which enhance learning including that with New York University providing a large number of student teachers. Everybody Wins/Power Lunches brings business people to act as "reading buddies". Extensive use is made of arts organizations such as dance companies and arts foundations. The school is becoming aware of the potential to develop partnerships to attract more funding.

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.

Constant assessment and reassessment of student progress based on dialogue, observation and student work characterizes this aspect of the school's work. The strength of the vision across the community means that all are engaged in debate and thinking to arrive at solutions that will bring about improvement. There is a stated commitment to this and part of the dialogue has centred on maintaining work that is simultaneously creative and disciplined. School leaders are diligent about making strategic decisions to modify practice based on outcomes as can be seen in recent changes to strengthen math instruction. The difficult decision to split mixed age classes in the upper grade resulted from the analysis of data and a determination to accelerate student learning. The school evaluates its progress through an on-going examination of student work, classroom observation, analysis of performance in tests and the mid year evaluation of student progress towards promotion to the next grade. It is working towards increasing attention to academic achievement whilst preserving what is "unique and wonderful". The principal and assistant principal have demonstrated considerable skill in moving this forward by building on the detailed knowledge of students and teachers and making the most of this "thinking school" to plan for its future success. They now know they have to find ways to share this information more efficiently.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: John Melser Charrette School PS3	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	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	➤	✓	+	◇
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