



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Margaret Douglas School**

**Early Childhood School 36**

**123 Morningside Drive  
Manhattan  
NY 10027**

**Principal: Cynthia Mullins-Simmons**

**Dates of review: January 14 - 15, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Ronnie Solow**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Margaret Douglas School is an early childhood school with 543 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 2. The school population comprises 59% Black, 36% Hispanic, 2% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 89%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 88% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The staff and parents respect the principal as a knowledgeable early childhood educator.
- Effective collaboration between the administration and staff improves student progress and achievement.
- The staff uses data wisely to assess student progress and achievement and drive the instructional program.
- School plans relate to the school's clear vision for each student and, include measurable goals and timeframes.
- Scheduling, staffing and budgetary decisions respond closely to student needs.
- Students identified as struggling receive excellent supplementary support from staff members and volunteer tutors during and after the school day.
- Professional development activities are differentiated according to teachers' needs, skill and interest.
- Teachers have many opportunities to observe and learn from each other and this improves their instruction.
- Extensive external partnerships support the academic, social and emotional development of the students.
- Well-established procedures and policies enable the efficient running of the school and foster an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further disaggregate data to assess progress over time and in relation to similar schools.
- Seek ways to communicate more effectively with all parents to enable them to understand the school's goals and its high expectations for all learners.
- Expand and develop additional activities to involve parents in the school life of their children.
- Develop a process to recognize the leadership skills of senior staff in order to increase the school's capacity for distributive leadership.

## 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.**

Margaret Douglas School is an early childhood center with a rich academic and arts-embedded program that meets the individual needs of the students. The experienced staff works in collaborative teams to strategize, implement and revise instructional activities based on information gathered from data, formal and informal assessments, running records and student conferences. Professional development for the mostly experienced staff is based on need, skill and interest. The school vision, including plans and timetables, is well integrated in the strategic planning processes of the school.

The use of computer-based assessments is enabling the staff to gain additional knowledge of the performance of the students. The inquiry team provides in-house training and support for the staff in the use of data-driven instructional techniques. The school closely tracks the progress of gender and ethnic groups, special education students, English language learners and a group of first graders with no prior schooling.

Extensive partnerships with cultural, academic and community-based organizations enhance the academic program at the school. Art, dance, percussion, vocal music, violin, keyboard, after-school sports, and media/technology instruction enrich the daily educational program. Parents are welcomed and invited to visit classrooms to observe and learn techniques they can use to assist their children. Additional parent involvement strategies are being developed and implemented. The school does not do enough to ensure that all parents, particularly the Hispanic population, are informed of the high expectations and educational goals for their children. The school recognizes that the program of classroom observation does not yet recognize and develop the leadership capacity of senior staff..

The school successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the last Quality Review. Instruction is differentiated based on formal and informal data review. Support services, using a pullout model, have been eliminated during the literacy and math instructional periods. Curriculum and grade-level assessments are now aligned across subject areas. Good data tracking procedures for academic achievement, behavior and attendance are in place. The Inquiry Team is studying a group of first grade students whose performance in spelling was below the benchmark level in September.

## **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 collects and analyzes a broad range of formal and informal data in order to understand the learning needs of students. Teachers use information gathered from formal assessments, technology-based assessments, running records, conference notes, observations and feedback from related service providers to make accurate assessments of student progress on regularly scheduled cycles.

Classroom computers enable staff to access and evaluate student performance data in literacy. This information is constantly monitored and used to direct instructional practices. Math instruction employs a similar procedure that is used to guide and direct instruction. The principal and assistant principal effectively monitor the process. Assessment binders and student portfolios, containing quantitative and qualitative information for each student in the class, are regularly reviewed by the administration in order to ascertain progress of individual students and the class as a whole.

Special education students, English language learners, and students with no prior schooling receive additional services, according to needs and mandates. Monitoring of needs and outcomes, by the principal, enables good analysis of the performance outcomes of ethnic groups, gender and other groups in the school. In response to the analysis, end-of-day activities incorporate gender-specific interests as well as academic needs. The school does not make a close enough comparison with its past performance and with similar schools to give an accurate assessment of its progress over time.

**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.**

Teams of teachers, coaches and administrators regularly meet for strategizing and planning to meet the needs of the students. Realistic benchmarks are established for students, classes and grades across the school. In August, school-wide goals and objectives are established from data review information, the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP), and the principal's goals and objectives. The curriculum is examined and grade-appropriate learning targets are determined. Monthly integrated curriculum maps set out the targeted goals by grade. The coaches and grade teams of teachers set class and student goals based on the data. English language learners, special education students and students with no prior schooling are a focused priority. Appropriate instructional strategies and good additional academic support services are provided as determined by need. Students identified as struggling receive excellent supplementary support from many school staff members and volunteer tutors, both during and after the school day.

High expectations for all students focus on academic rigor. Monthly newsletters, parent workshops on curriculum topics, parent association meetings and regularly scheduled open school events keep parents informed about school goals and expectations but too few parents attend. A General Education Diploma program for parents, designed to

improve parental education performance, highlights the importance of education for all members of a family. Additional information reaches parents through the automated telephone messenger system, pick-up and drop-off conversations, and celebratory events that welcome parents into the classroom. The principal's open-door policy welcomes parents whenever they choose to come into the school. Nevertheless, the school is concerned that it does not reach all parents and is evaluating strategies that will further increase parental involvement.

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

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

The school follows the mandated curriculum for English language arts and math. Science and social studies adhere to the State guidelines. Balanced literacy, using leveled libraries supplemented with commercial programs, supports literacy learning and provides useful data about student progress towards their goals. Everyday Math provides excellent instructional strategies and useful data for the teachers regarding progress in math. Good preparation for the third grade State literacy examination is incorporated into the curriculum in a variety of ways. A second grade exit project, designed around the rain forest, is integrating skills from literacy, science, social studies and the arts. Well-designed pacing calendars align the curricular areas by month for each grade.

Students are actively engaged in their learning. They know their reading and math levels, articulate the work they are accomplishing and know who to approach for assistance. They are eager to tell what they are doing and who is helping them to achieve. Teachers are held accountable for student progress through a rigorous monitoring procedure. A well-designed checklist assists the principal, assistant principal and coaches in their assessment of teaching and learning. Budget, staffing and hiring decisions are based on student needs. For example, the principal responded readily when data highlighted the need for additional leveled library books in English and Spanish, manipulative materials for the math program, and paraprofessionals for the special education program. Data collection, using computer technology, is supported through the budget. Attendance and lateness are a priority for the school. For example, at 89%, attendance for last year showed the need for improved monitoring procedures. A family worker was hired to reach out to families and support the work of the attendance teacher. Incentives and rewards such as recognition on the school bulletin board are given for excellent and improved attendance.

**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 and assistant principal visit classes daily, observe the teaching and learning and provide quality feedback to the teachers. Coaches, buddy teachers and grade team colleagues regularly visit one another's classrooms, observing and providing assistance for one another. The principal and other administrators are respected for their knowledge of early childhood education practices. An atmosphere of mutual concern and respect pervades the school.

Professional development activities are based on the needs, skills and interests of the staff members. An insightful survey, used to ascertain staff interest and needs, together with observed needs from formal and informal observations, are the basis for the planning. Grade team meetings and faculty conferences are good forums for professional discussions in response to grade and school data. Demonstration lessons and budding with other teachers are regular parts of the professional development program. Teachers observe lessons in grades above and below the one they teach, in order to familiarize themselves with the cascade of skills that needs to be developed. Once a month, new teachers meet with the principal to address their particular needs. The principal recognizes that formal classroom observation does not do enough to enable senior staff to share expertise about leadership and is seeking more appropriate ways of recognizing and developing these skills. Many excellent external partnerships with academic and business organizations enhance the academic program. Well-established policies and procedures enable the school to run effectively and very smoothly.

**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 monitors student performance across classes, grades and the whole school using the data from formal and informal assessments, student portfolio work, and other in-class information sources. The CEP and the principal's goals and objectives provide the basis and the benchmarks for the focused plan for the year. The CEP contains clear targets for all curricular areas including dates and measures of success. Timelines included in these plans comprise formal assessments, administered on a timetable that is monitored in conjunction with other regular measures of classroom performance. The school-wide curriculum maps outline the monthly benchmarks that are also assessed in a variety of ways. The impact on student learning is evaluated in many ways. Faculty conferences, grade team meetings and interactions between coaches and teachers provide good forums for discussions regarding success, or the need for revisions. August planning is an opportunity for staff to examine the outcomes of the previous year and use the information to inform the current planning process. The principal has an accurate view of the future needs of the school. The well-developed strategic plans include measurable timeframes and identify areas for systemic change. The staff responds to the vision of each child as an independent learner, supporting new initiatives and responding flexibly to students' individual needs.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Margaret Douglas School</b>	△	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X		