



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Amsterdam School - Hudson Honors Middle  
School**

**Elementary-Middle School 191  
210 West 61st Street  
New York  
NY 10023**

**Principal: Maria Verdesoto**

**Dates of review: March 25 - 26, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: John Collings**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Amsterdam School - Hudson Middle school is an elementary/middle school with 509 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 43% Black, 44% Hispanic, 8% White, 4% Asian students and 1% American Indian. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 18.2% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 92.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 79.6% eligibility.

There are two schools on the campus, the Amsterdam Elementary School and the Hudson Honors Middle School. Each has an assistant principal in charge of day-to-day running with the same principal in overall charge of both schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- This is a well-run school with high expectations of staff, parents and students, which results in a good climate for learning.
- Data is used well by the administration and day-to-day in classrooms to identify the performance and progress of all students.
- The school uses data well to support students in the greatest need of improvement and those who have been identified as a particular focus.
- The recently innovative reorganization of the middle school is giving a good structure to enable students to learn effectively across a range of subjects.
- There is a good stimulating curriculum including opportunities for the arts motivating students to learn effectively.
- Differentiated instruction is being used well to support lower- and middle-achieving students to make good progress.
- The budget has been used very well to effect curriculum changes through good staffing and professional development.
- There is good differentiated professional development to support all teachers including those new to the school and the profession.
- There is a good climate of mutual support between students and staff and students creating a good climate for learning throughout the school.
- There is close and frequent collaboration between teachers that includes good opportunities for intervisitations between classes and other schools.

### What the school needs to improve

- Clarify how the long-term and interim goals for the elementary and middle schools contribute to whole school goals.
- Extend the good data systems in place to set student goals based on prior progress for social studies and science.
- Continue the emphasis on differentiating work in classes to ensure all higher achieving students are fully challenged to meet their potential.
- Further develop relationships with parents so that a greater number work collaboratively with the school to improve their children's learning.

## 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.**

Improving student learning is central to the philosophy and climate of this good school. The school uses hard data from computer systems and soft data from day-to-day classroom observations for checking students' work, very effectively. Information is combined from these sources to identify the performance and progress of different groups of students, to identify individuals' next area of development. Good professional development supports teachers in the use of new systems becoming available as well as the record keeping in, for example, reading to improve students' access and understanding across the curriculum. Using data to set students' goals based on their prior progress rather than just current performance is being developed but has not been in place long enough to show significant impact.

There have been substantial changes in the way the school organizes the curriculum. This has resulted in a very strong emphasis on the development of reading through increasing the time allocated specifically to reading itself, and also by integrating reading across the curriculum in all subjects. English language arts, math, science and social studies have also been given equal time. Teachers give greater emphasis to science and social studies to create many more opportunities for students to develop their reading and apply and acquire a wide range of writing styles for differing purposes. This is beginning to have a significant impact on student learning, particularly in the middle school.

The success of the new curricular approach is due to the very good use of the budget to support teachers through good professional development in the use of data and also in creating opportunities to develop reading across the curriculum. This is particularly effective because it is well targeted and differentiated to meet teachers' specific needs. Teachers have frequent opportunities to visit each other's classes and other schools to help them reflect and improve their instruction. Professional development has concentrated on emphasizing a greater use of differentiation in the classroom to help all students receive instruction based on their capabilities. The majority of students make good progress. However, differentiating instruction to ensure higher achieving students are fully challenged is applied less well. This has become the focus of the inquiry team. They are developing strategies to support teachers in using challenging differentiated instruction more effectively for higher achieving students.

Whole school goals are clear and explicit particularly to the school leadership team. However, it is not always clear how each of the two schools interpret and implement the goals for the whole school.

## **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 good combination of hard and soft data to identify the performance and progress of students, classes and grades. Teachers use class-based data, including, running records, conferencing notes and end of unit tests, very effectively. Of particular note are the very detailed records that have enabled the school to identify specific issues in reading.

The school uses hard data through systems such as ARIS and Acuity very well. This has enabled the school to compare the performance and progress of different groups of students in English language arts and math, English language learners, ethnics groups, special education students and between boys and girls. However, good data analysis also identifies that whilst the progress of the vast majority of students, including English language learners and special education students is very good, higher achieving students do not necessarily make maximum progress. Good use of this hard data has enabled the school to monitor how well it is improving year on year effectively and in comparison with other schools. Data is less effective in science and social studies. The school is developing rubrics and student portfolios firmly based on their curriculum to address this. However, it has not been fully developed or in place long enough to enable its usefulness to be proven.

Good professional development enables teachers to use the increasing amount of data available to the school. Hard data is used well and a significant amount of time and training has been allocated to developing an integrated approach to the curriculum including developing students' expectations in each grade across the full ability range. Collegiate planning is making a direct impact on teachers' abilities to track students' progress as well as helping to ensure all are fully challenged.

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

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Setting student goals is well established in the school. Teachers have increased the use of data showing progress trends to set realistic and aspirational goals for each student. This is ensuring the vast majority of students have suitably challenging goals reflecting the high expectations in the school. Challenging higher achieving students is the focus of the inquiry team. Early indications suggest intensified attention, monitoring and ensuring the target group is challenged fully, is having a positive impact. The school supports students in the greatest need of improvement very well and they make very good progress.

School goals focus well on improving the performance and progress of all groups of students. However, because the differing needs of students in each of the schools, whole school goals and the goals for each of the schools are not well integrated and therefore not clearly articulated to the whole school community.

Parents are very supportive of the school. They respect the high expectations demanded, feel they are well informed, and are aware of the goals set by staff for their children. With the increasing amount of data available the school is endeavoring to make more information available and improve relationships with parents in a hope that a greater proportion will work collaboratively with the school to improve their children's learning.

**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 curriculum is good. The school has adopted a broad and effective range of strategies to monitor the performance and progress of students in English language arts, math and reading and is creating good procedures in science and social studies. This is enabling the school to gain a more holistic view of students' abilities and use students' strengths to develop their weaknesses. The curriculum is well integrated with an emphasis on reading and projects facilitating the application and consolidation of knowledge, understanding and skills across subjects. This creates a stimulating, motivating and engaging climate for learning. The school has innovative plans to develop this greater curriculum integration to enhance learning even further.

The reorganization of curriculum and staffing in the middle school has greatly improved student engagement and learning. English language arts, math, science and social studies are given equal time. Teachers now only teach their specialism and enrichment classes in which they have a particular interest and expertise. This has greatly increased the involvement and learning of these students. The budget has been used very strategically to ensure there are adequate staff, resources and professional development to support curricular changes. To ensure that there is a significant emphasis given to the arts, there is very effective support from the Lincoln Centre Institute and Studio-in-the-School.

Teachers use differentiation well. In particular, this has supported lower achieving and middle achieving students very well. However, from good data analysis the school has identified that this good practice does not extend adequately to challenging students who perform well. There is mutual trust between students, and staff and students. This has been created through good teaching, student support and an engaging curriculum. Due to this in combination with the appointment of a family worker, attendance is improving.

**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 principals use a range of differentiated classroom observations to give responsibilities to experienced teachers whilst supporting those new to the school and to the profession. Teachers find the observations and the subsequent professional dialogue instructive resulting in good professional development to meet individual teacher and whole school needs. Many opportunities for intervisitations between classes in the elementary school and middle school, and with other schools, allow teachers to reflect and develop their own instructional skills.

Students feel very well supported by all staff. They feel safe in the school and able to approach any member of staff with academic or personal problems. A good range of support services ensures students, and wherever possible parents, receive all the help they need. The school also uses the services of "Peace Games" which involves parents, staff and students in active peace and conflict resolution. This makes a significant contribution to creating a supportive climate for learning in the school. The school runs very smoothly overall, and students want to come to school to learn. Significant partners supporting the academic and personal growth of students include the Lincoln Centre Institute, as identified above, and the Teachers College in developing literacy across the curriculum and providing challenging professional development.

**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 principal has a very clear vision for the school. Her vision and tenacity since her appointment has been central to the school's success, and the good progress of the vast majority of students. She has very effectively steered the school from being an elementary school to one covering pre-kindergarten to grade 8. This past year she has had the full support of two assistant principals, one in charge of the elementary school and the other the middle school. This has enabled her to create a less centralized administration and develop the collegiate style prevalent in the school.

The school reviews progress towards goals systematically. It has differentiated and modified professional development to meet the goals. It has been very careful to monitor the effect of giving English language arts, math, science and social studies equal time. Hard and soft data is being used well to identify whether these strategic changes and innovations are having a positive impact on learning and whether the expected improvements in reading are having a positive impact on students' performance and progress in all aspects of learning.

The needs of the elementary school and middle school are different, yet they share common themes, for example, the emphasis on reading and giving equal time to core curriculum areas. However, because of the differing structures and expertise needed in each school, implementation is different. Some goals are not necessarily common to each school, resulting in some lack of clarity in the relationships between the elementary school, middle school and whole school goals.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Amsterdam-Hudson Honors Middle School</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<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 . . .	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	
<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 . . .	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		
<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 and tardiness?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					X

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>