



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Midtown West School

Public School 212

**328 West 48th Street
New York
NY 10036**

Principal: Dean Ketchum

Dates of review: October 30 - 31, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Martyn Groucutt

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Midtown West is an elementary school with 347 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 16% Black, 26% Hispanic, 44% White and 13% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 7.4% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 96.4%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The dynamic leadership of the principal enables the school to move forward in a variety of ways that are raising achievement.
- The commitment of faculty and staff to the success of the students creates an environment which effectively enables learning to take place.
- The engagement of students gives them a feeling of ownership of their learning.
- Promotion of high levels of parental involvement creates a dynamic sense of partnership.
- The school undertakes a variety of assessments throughout the year which enables careful tracking of individual student progress.
- Classroom teachers create a narrative on every student for parents at the mid-point of the year which reflects a detailed knowledge of the whole student.
- From the point of initial concern, effective academic intervention supports those in greatest need of improvement.
- Teachers are given excellent professional development opportunities, including opportunities to see best practice in similar schools.
- Every student has clear goals, carefully monitored throughout the year, supporting their academic growth.
- Using the local community is developing the meaningful social studies curriculum that is at the heart of teaching and learning in the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the numbers achieving Level 4 by implementing strategies currently being researched by the inquiry team.
- Develop a process of individual goal setting for teachers that includes measurable goals and an identification of professional development needs.
- Continue the development of the internal math assessment tools to create a clear picture of areas of individual strength and weakness for every student.
- Continue to refine the use of data to promote differentiated instruction, with a particular focus on extending the achievement of the most able.

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 school is using a range of data to excellent effect. It is producing first-class evidence on student achievement and using its own regular assessments to track the progress of every individual with care. The school has a detailed knowledge of what each student knows and can achieve. This is within a framework that is constantly being updated and reported to parents as the year progresses.

The school is a positive learning environment within which students and their parents are also involved in the setting of goals alongside their teachers. Teachers develop a detailed knowledge, not only of the students' academic progress, but also of their whole personality and this is shared with parents as a narrative at the mid-point of the school year. Students at most risk are identified very early on from the very first baseline tests undertaken in kindergarten. Academic intervention services are highly effective and the number of students only reaching Levels 1 and 2 have declined markedly over recent times.

The core of the curriculum is around a social studies framework based on the idea of "community". Care is taken to address all the necessary skills in order to ensure that students make effective academic progress. The arts are strongly represented. Students are fully involved in their learning through the good collaborative approaches that are a hall mark of teaching strategies. The impact of this is to enable students to feel a real sense of ownership of their own learning. As a result they are focused and receive enjoyment and satisfaction from their studies. The ability to identify and support students who may be at risk has produced a school where differentiated instruction is effectively meeting needs. However, the school is not yet meeting the challenge of helping more students reach Level 4. The principal provides clear and focused leadership. He provides excellent support to faculty through his clear knowledge of their professional practice. Yet, teachers do not consistently set individual, objectively measureable goals for their development. The ability to evaluate every student's progress through the year and to adapt plans and practice means that the goals established for every student are monitored effectively. There is flexibility for changing goals over time, and so the potential for every student to achieve at the highest levels has been created.

Even though it is a comparatively short time since the last Quality Review the school has already been able to show that it has addressed the issues raised with rigor. For example, teachers have improved their skills at differentiating instruction through good professional development and monitoring of plans and goals has improved. The inquiry team has started its work and is already analyzing available data to look at ways in which students can be best supported in reaching the next level.

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.

Going well beyond the data provided by ECLAS-2 and State and City testing, the school has developed an impressive range of ways in which it acquires meaningful data on the performance of every student, classroom and grade level. At each grade the school has produced a highly effective skills based inventory that analyzes what students might be expected to know. Students are assessed three times during the year to create an immediate and very relevant picture of progress and needs which is shared with parents. Over the last year there has been a focus on looking at literacy based skills, and this is now extending to math. The next step will be to complete the assessment tool that will break down achievement into different skill levels for each part of the math curriculum.

From the earliest assessments, possible academic deficits are identified and steps are taken to provide support. The assistant principal has expertise in special education and provides effective leadership for special education services, so that the needs of such students are taken into full account. Similarly the needs of different groups, including ethnic and gender based groups, are identified and tremendous efforts are made to ensure equality of opportunity. At the moment there are very few English language learners, but specialist support is provided through push-in and pull-out to meet their needs.

The school is able to chart the very considerable improvements it has made since the arrival of the current principal less than three years ago. They have been sustained and substantial. Not only does the school compare itself with similar schools, it also sends its teachers to observe best practice in such schools where this exists. Teachers are becoming sophisticated in their ability to use data to track progress and when a new colleague joins the staff they are given effective support so that they can quickly become as adept in their own practice.

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.

At the outset of the school year a "You talk, I listen" session is held between parents and teachers. This is part of the collaborative process in which parents and students work alongside faculty. This creates an immediate focus on individual goals, but care is also taken through very effective academic intervention and student support to ensure that the needs of identified groups are also taken into full consideration. Since there is a strong focus on the early identification of possible needs, action is prompt and focused. This includes not only identifying students' needs, but also at looking at the practice of the class teacher so that advice on strategies might be offered where appropriate.

The progress of those in greatest need of improvement is monitored very effectively by well qualified specialists. This includes regular Monday sessions between the academic intervention team and service providers. As a result the progress of these students is monitored carefully, and wherever possible support is provided within a general education

framework. However, the school is not yet ensuring that the most gifted academically are also stretched to achieve their fullest potential within this framework.

Common planning time and meetings for professional development aimed at improving student performance occur weekly. The school is proactive in seeking to improve student outcomes. Articulate and committed parents, who are strongly welcomed as partners in the education process, share these high expectations. Workshops are arranged, and they are also welcomed to talk with their children's teachers. For their part, each teacher writes a weekly newsletter so parents know what activities have been going on in class. In addition to the regular information on individual progress teachers write individual narrative accounts of students' progress, both academically and socially, for their parents at the mid-point of the school year. Parents interviewed during the review were very impressed by the detailed knowledge that teachers acquire of their children. This creates a two-way flow of information and creates a very strong bond between home and school.

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

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

The core curriculum generates interim data on progress at regular intervals during the year, enabling the school to have a clear picture of individual progress. Over the last year the stress has been on literacy, but the process is now turning to math. One of the latest challenges has been the refinement of math assessments to create a tool that will break down student understanding into component skills. This provides a clear picture of concepts grasped and those needing further work. Implementation of this is one of the goals for the school this year.

The curriculum is based around social studies, and an examination of community. Developing from a study of the family in kindergarten, the skills and concepts studied become ever more sophisticated. Through them the full range of academic skills expected in a more standard curriculum are covered in detail, as well as through discrete study.

Teachers are held responsible for the progress of their students, responding with absolute professionalism so that students are fully engaged. Much work is project-based and students have a feeling of owning their own learning as a result of the collaborative and independent learning skills that are encouraged. As a result of their commitment, students demonstrate growth throughout the year. Budgeting and staffing decisions support the school's progress. For example, the inquiry team decided to forego their allowance so that the funding could go towards wider staff development.

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, who is very well respected by staff and parents, undertakes regular observations of classroom teaching. He has a detailed knowledge of his teachers and so is able to target professional development very effectively. This has helped move the school forward and improve student outcomes significantly in the time he has been at the

school. For their part, faculty show a total commitment to the school, its students and to each other. This enables intervisitation and mutual support, including effective mentoring for new teachers. New teachers receive very effective guidance and mentoring, allowing for a smooth transition when they begin teaching at the school.

Strong personal and academic guidance provides good support services for students, creating a positive academic atmosphere for the students. The school runs very smoothly in a spirit of community and cooperation between adults and students. It extends to the partnerships that support the wider curriculum and so learning opportunities are maximized both in and out of the formal classroom setting.

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 displays confidence in using the increasing amounts of data it has to measure student success and to make very effective changes where this might prove beneficial. Yet, the creation of professional goals for faculty, measurable over time and supported by professional development, is not a strong feature of the school. Periodic assessments are seen as an important tool for measuring the effectiveness of plans and interventions, both for individuals and for groups. However, the school finds their usefulness is limited by the delay in waiting for the outcomes. It therefore makes highly effective use of its own data which is being systematically collected throughout the year. This is more immediate and is certainly put to very good use because of this.

Since each student has very clear interim goals, the constantly updated picture generated by the data enables the school to make strategic decisions on moderating practices and improving outcomes over time. This process, applied with rigor to challenging the most gifted to reach their full potential, will further develop what is already a school showing that it is committed to excellence. Yet the school has shown big gains in student outcomes over a short time. As the whole school community shows determination that this should continue, the school is in an ideal situation to become even more effective as time goes by.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Midtown West	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	