



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Manhattan East School for Arts and Academics

Middle School 224

410 East 100 Street

New York

NY 10029

Principal: Lillian Sarro

Dates of review: May 1 - 2, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Audra M Watson

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

Manhattan East School for Arts and Academics is a middle school with 263 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 30% Black, 45% Hispanic, 19% White, and 6% Asian and other students. The student body includes 2.6% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.9%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school is located on the fifth floor of a building that it shares with another larger middle school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal articulates a clear vision of what the school should be like which is fully understood by all staff.
- The school has strong core curriculum in place that is well aligned to State standards and creatively constructed.
- The school's leadership has established a tone of mutual respect ,which is shared by students, teachers, and families.
- Teachers spend significant additional hours after school and at lunch supporting the academic and personal development of students.
- There is a clear understanding by all staff of what characteristics constitute effective teaching.
- Encouraged by the principal, teachers are committed to their own and their colleagues' ongoing learning and professional growth.
- The school has a particularly strong extended curriculum with electives and extra activities which keep students engaged and motivated.
- There is good knowledge of and attention to the academic and social needs of each student.
- High levels of collaboration among all the schools' stakeholders (teachers, parents, and students) enable the school to run smoothly.
- The school keeps parents and families well informed about student progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the use of data to rigorously monitor the progress of all students at interim periods.
- Enhance the quality of differentiation across classrooms to more effectively meet all students needs.
- Identify other schools, with similar populations, where comparisons will be useful in moving forward the work of the school.
- Continue to provide teachers with the skills necessary to work most effectively with emotionally disturbed students in special needs classes.
- Utilize data more strategically to make professional development decisions that help improve teacher and student outcomes.

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 has a diverse student body and high expectations of its students and staff. A magnet school with a strong commitment to the arts, the school attracts students from all boroughs, except Staten Island. Despite an average commute of about one and a half hours for almost 60% of the students, the attendance rate of 95.1% is higher than the City average. Students, parents, and teachers are all committed to a broad arts curriculum while maintaining high academic expectations in the core curriculum.

There is a rigorous curriculum of studies aligned to state standards and focused on enabling students to graduate with Regents diplomas in earth science, U.S. history and government, and Spanish. During this school year, students will have their first opportunity to take the algebra I Regents exam. This is possible because of the principal's unwavering commitment to high standards for student learning. While there is much focus on student data within the school, to date the school has not measured its progress against that of similar schools to see what lessons can be learned.

The inquiry team, composed of three key staff members, has used a multi-step process to identify 15 students with low achievement in grades 6 through 8. The students identified had a 50-point decrease on 2007 exams, receive AIS services, and were identified by classroom teachers as underperforming. The team meets weekly to discuss students' progress and to focus on the two students identified for their case study. Further attention is needed to ensure progress of the special education students in the school is similar to that of their peers.

The issues identified during the last Quality Review have been addressed and the principal has noted that the areas for growth were helpful in facilitating the organization of her thinking. The Comprehensive Education Plan is used to formalize planning and set quantifiable goals and timeframes. Utilizing the resources of the schools' support network, the school has begun to address differentiated instruction. A professional development provider will work with teachers extensively until January 2009. Differentiated Instruction has become an area of focus for the entire staff and the principal provides all staff members with books and articles on the subject. The effective portfolio practices have now been extended to science. Teachers continue to share the work they are doing in informal meetings and during their formal monthly conferences. The school has purchased a smart board and is in the process of receiving additional data projectors to enhance teaching and learning. Finally, school staff use opportunities to integrate students in self-contained classes into general education classes where possible.

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.

In addition to the analysis of City and State data, the school uses a variety of additional data sources to determine student progress across subjects. Prior to the start of the school year, the principal and data analyst review available data to determine priority areas for the school. This information is then shared with staff. Staff members meet as a whole group and in discipline groups to determine goals for students.

The data analyst is a key member of the school staff. He regularly provides teachers with data about students in their classes. Analysis of the 2007 student performance data revealed a decrease in the number of students achieving Level 4 across the three grades. As a result, additional English language arts periods were added to student schedules to replace some of the numerous elective periods.

Baseline English language arts and math exams are given to students at the start of the year to determine specific skills needing attention. An item skills analysis determined the need to focus on one specific skill area in each grade. To address these areas, teachers integrate these skills into their lessons and work collaboratively to help students understand the skills across content areas. Staff members have also been trained and are particularly adept at administering periodic assessments at specific intervals throughout the year. These more formalized assessment structures, as well as student portfolios, are used well to gauge student progress. The school does not yet compare the progress of students with that of students in similar schools.

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 school does a particularly effective in using the data collected to plan for student learning. With the support of the principal, data specialist and subject leaders, teachers collaboratively set goals for students. While formal meetings take place monthly, informal meetings among staff take place on a daily basis. These meetings help teachers keep abreast of student performance across subject areas and grades. The school is well aware of the data of its subgroup populations and is attempting to address how to meet the needs of these learners. The needs of both English language learners, of which there are few, and special education students are regularly discussed and addressed. One such example is the twice-weekly planning session with the science teacher and the collaborative team teacher.

The school's advisory structure serves as one of the many effective systems in place for sharing information with students and parents about how well students are progressing in their classes. Student portfolios also facilitate tracking of progress. Teachers share portfolios with one another and, in some subjects, they travel from grade to grade to share and build upon what students have been able to accomplish.

Extremely high expectations of students are held by teachers and the school principal. These expectations are shared with parents and students early in the school year and then are repeatedly reinforced during the course of the year. Schoolnotes and emails are two methods of communication available to both parents and students about student performance. The guidance counselor monitors students who consistently do not complete homework. In addition, progress reports are sent to parents at the midpoint of each semester. Seniors are afforded additional attention from their teachers and the guidance counselor. They work together to keep students aware of their progress and aware of the standards that must be achieved and maintained for entry into the high schools of their choice. The school is less successful in addressing the needs of the neediest learners in the school's special education classes.

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.

As one the 200 schools originally exempted from the mandated curriculum, the principal continues to be committed to a broad-based curriculum. She is deeply supportive of teachers as they work on planning and implementing creative and engaging lessons which draw students into the subject matter. Teachers, in turn, understand that despite the creative freedom they are afforded, lessons must be aligned to standards and student needs. As such, they work particularly hard to achieve this. While many teachers are adept at differentiation, others are still learning to do this effectively. In the sixth and seventh grades, music and arts instruction are part of students' core coursework. A wide range of electives is also available to meet a wide variety of student interests. Despite eliminating some electives to increase focus on students' areas of weakness, the menu of electives available to students remains extensive including opportunities for students to participate in camping, fieldwork, jazz band, jewelry making, and ceramics among many others.

There is an atmosphere of mutual respect evident throughout the school. Parents feel that the principal and teachers are accessible and attentive to their children. As such, the many activities, including block parties and student performances are well attended by families as are meetings focused on students' academic progress. The school has excellent procedures for monitoring student attendance and lateness. Phone calls and emails are made promptly by the main office to let parents know when students are late or absent. Teachers also consistently keep parents abreast of information regarding student attendance. The combination and consistent implementation of these procedures has resulted in an attendance rate which exceeds the City average for middle schools.

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 is consistent in her monitoring of classrooms, lessons, and student progress. She visits classrooms on a daily basis and leaves feedback for teachers in the form of post-it notes celebrating areas in which they are doing particularly well and identifying areas needing additional focus. The principal is steadfast in her belief that professional

development should derive from both the interests of the teachers and the needs of students. As such, she frequently shares professional development related to their content and subject with teachers and encourages them to pursue opportunities both during the year and during the summer. Staff members also share professional development opportunities that they know will interest their colleagues. In addition to the informal meetings that teachers have to share their work, one of the monthly staff meetings is also devoted to discipline-based sharing of lessons and assessment information. Analysis of the school-wide trends may uncover additional trends which would allow for even more strategic professional development decisions to be made.

There is only one teacher new to the building this school year. Early career teachers, like the entire faculty, have the support of their colleagues and the principal as they have come to understand the expectations of teachers in this school. As the growth and development of teachers is such an integral part of the school program, much of the collaborative work and sharing that takes place among staff is not considered additional professional development. Instead, it is viewed as the way business is done in the school.

The school effectively meets student non-academic needs. While there is not a guidance counselor specifically focused on the needs of the special education students, arrangements have been made with the guidance counselor in another school. In addition, utilizing the services of their full-time guidance counselor, an itinerant counselor who comes to the school two days per week, and the counselor of the school downstairs, the principal has managed to schedule weekly group meetings for boys and girls.

The school is orderly and well run. Clear procedures are in place to support an effective learning environment. The school is currently making plans to provide all teachers with the skills necessary to support its emotionally disturbed students who have had a large number of in-school suspensions this year. It is simultaneously researching the practices of gifted and talented education in the United Kingdom in order to integrate effective practices in the future.

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 principal has a clear vision of the future development of the school and a committed staff team who support the constant quest to improve. The school has worked to put more formalized structures in place to monitor the progress of students. These structures are well aligned to the goals outlined in the schools Comprehensive Education Plan. Administrators and most teachers consistently assess and document student performance in order to ensure that progress is being made. Differentiation takes place in many classrooms, but is still a work in progress for some staff members. There is a need for differentiation to be undertaken consistently across all classes and all grades in the school.

The inquiry team and the principal work together to put in place effective strategies to address the needs of the students in most need of support. Ongoing reviews of assessment results takes place at predictable intervals, however, there is not consistent enough focus on student growth during interim periods. As a result, modifications are not made quickly enough when necessary to ensure maximum progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Manhattan East School for Arts & Academics	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 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