



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Computer School**

**Middle School 245**

**100 West 77 Street  
New York  
NY 10024**

**Principal: Henry Zymeck**

**Dates of review: January 10 - 11, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Jo Storrs**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Computer School is a middle school with 333 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 25% Black, 33% Hispanic, 30% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 17% 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 95.7%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school's mission is to provide student-centred learning to accelerate learning and raise achievement. The school shares the building, cafeteria and auditorium with another middle school located on the bottom two floors.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal provides inspirational and empowering leadership and is passionate about the school and its students.
- The principal and teachers use data meticulously to lead decision-making and improvements.
- The ambitious expectations of students and clear vision for future improvements are created and shared by the school community.
- The high degree of collaboration between teachers improves instruction and planning and accelerates student progress and achievement.
- The learning environment and systems in the school encourage very high attendance.
- The exceptional mutual trust and respect between students and teachers impacts positively on students' personal and academic development.
- The prevalence of excellent instruction and engaging curriculum provision motivates and engages students.
- The flexibility of teachers to trial new methods and approaches enhances learning for all students.
- The regular use of an extensive range of assessment tools measures the effectiveness of instruction, plans and interventions.
- The valuable interactive assessment and communication systems enable parents, students and the school to agree and regularly track each student's targets.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure all teachers develop the skills to differentiate planning and instruction consistently in lessons to accelerate the progress of all students.
- Develop the work of the inquiry team to reduce any differences in achievement relating to gender and ethnicity.

## 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 principal's vision, high expectations, dedication and effective use of data to inform student achievement are key factors that underpin his leadership. The school community endorses and shares his high expectations of students and a clear vision for future improvements. He works tirelessly with teachers to offer an exciting and interesting education to challenge and motivate students to work hard and achieve high standards. Students benefit from exceptional support and a broad, rich and challenging curriculum that motivates them to do well, which includes an impressive range of out-of-school activities. The school functions smoothly and efficiently and provides a calm learning environment. This is a major achievement in the shared accommodation.

Meticulous use of valuable data leads to ambitious goals and procedures to review and revise goals. A high level of mutual trust and respect between students and teachers effectively develops students personally and academically. Teachers work closely together to establish targets and develop creative and flexible curriculum plans and interventions. These are often tailored to students' learning needs, although good practice is not consistent across the school.

Students enjoy school and attendance is excellent. Valuable assessment and communication systems build a close partnership between the school and parents. Rigorous monitoring procedures are closely linked to planning and goal-setting, so keep the students' achievements under constant review and ensure the ever-improving effectiveness of this successful school.

The school has tackled the issues identified in the previous Quality Review rigorously. The performance of individuals and all groups of students is thoroughly reviewed. Outcomes inform school goals and student targets to design exciting programs and interventions. Monitoring is thorough and effective and led to the identification of gender and ethnic performance differences which are being researched and addressed well by the inquiry team.

## **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 has a comprehensive knowledge of students' performance and progress through scrupulous evaluation of all available data, including surveys, attendance, study habits and student interviews. The principal makes comparisons with past performance and against similar schools. He meticulously analyzes and evaluates the statistics for all students, especially those whose performance is not aligned to expectations. He has an intimate awareness of each student's needs from enrolment to graduation and he learns each student's name on their first day. Minute differences in performance in any individual, group, grade or class are detected quickly, researched thoroughly and specialized interventions designed. For example, data identified gender and ethnic performance differences which are being researched and addressed by the inquiry team.

Leaders, teachers, students and parents use the valuable interactive assessment and communication systems to agree and check regularly individual students' personal and academic targets. Teachers are highly skilled in the use of electronic and other data and new teachers work with a mentor until confident. They use this information to place students in appropriate academic groups and to inform planning and instruction. They track individual student's progress through summative and assignment data. Academic or personal weaknesses are quickly identified, comparisons across subjects and classes are made and planning or interventions adjusted if required. As with all other students, the development of special education students and English language learners is systematically tracked and discussed with the counselor so interventions support student needs closely and ensure they make progress. The principal and teachers constantly update their understanding of the progress and performance of each student at weekly staff and planning meetings.

**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.**

Under the principal's clear and supportive guidance, the school is upholding its vision to provide individualized learning programs to accelerate learning that fully involve students and parents. Parents welcome this involvement and feel there is a true partnership with teachers and staff and trust the principal. They describe him as the school's "wow" factor. Students agree.

The whole school community knows and actively supports the school's high expectations. All facets of data are rigorously examined to set challenging improvement goals for the school, grades and subject. Ambitious targets are established for each student that successfully help students at risk and those on accelerated academic programs. Targets match school goals and are rigorous, measurable and time-bonded. They inform academic and personal development, grade, subject and individual targets

and enable plans to be updated regularly. Student data is tracked constantly so the school knows the progress of individuals towards their target. Formal periodic assessments are used and are being further developed. Parents and students are fully involved in school and encouraged to develop plans to improve their children's learning and personal development. They value knowing and interacting with their own children's goals and progress towards target acquisition using the website or written and verbal communications. Teachers use all data collaboratively to establish appropriate teaching groups and to set goals for specific skill deficits. With support from teachers and advisors, students help to set and agree their own goals for academic and personal development. The principal and teachers check all targets weekly to ensure student progress aligns with expectations, and suitable interventions are set up if required.

**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.**

Students and parents have high praise for the education and care provided by the principal and staff. Imaginative budgeting, scheduling and staffing provide a rich and exciting curriculum to engage students and meet mandatory test requirements. The curriculum is enriched to meet the school's vision and the diverse needs of all students, including accelerated learning groups. Students benefit from cross-subject project-based learning, trips, technology and the recent dynamic lunchtime electives, such as debate and cooking. Extended-day workshops meet specifically additional learning needs. Students enjoy working in mixed grades or groups for Spanish, visual art and physical education and say it improves relationships across the school.

The principal and teachers set the tone of high expectations and are very good role models to students. Attractive displays of students' work and achievements further enhance the environment and endorse expectations. The mutual trust, respect and the collaboration between students and most teachers is exceptional and successfully supports students' overall development. The school is a safe and inclusive learning environment where students are confident to discuss many issues. Students enjoy school and the school's rigorous procedures result in very high attendance. Many teachers skillfully differentiate planning and instruction to accelerate the progress of all students, but this is not consistent across the school. All these factors, together with the prevalence of high quality instruction, motivate and engage students.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

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

The school has successfully appointed loyal and vibrant teachers, dedicated to the school's vision and student achievement. The principal regularly observes teachers and also uses other information from the achievement of students, grades and classes to give each teacher specific information by which to improve instruction. Some valuable training is provided through partnerships with universities and cultural institutions. The

most influential approach is when individual strengths are identified through teacher visitations within the school.

The principal trusts teachers to do their job and to share and model best practices which are also identified in a handbook and staff memos for all teachers to use. He supports teachers to trial new methods and flexible approaches that are enhancing learning for all students. New teachers have mentors and every teacher serves as a professional developer for colleagues. Careful scheduling provides pre-year planning sessions and weekly lunchtime conferences and workshops. Teachers plan curricular units collaboratively and review their effectiveness during subject-specific planning meetings.

The school's goal to develop students personally as well as academically is admirably addressed by all teachers acting as advisors. In this capacity, they lead discussions about personal, health and social issues with small groups of students. Students find this invaluable. They are enthusiastic about the after-school activities, sports and trips which help them to be reliable by working cooperatively and independently in a variety of groups. Equally, partnerships with external bodies, such as the excellent link with the Lincoln Centre Institute enrich students' cultural and creative development and broaden their horizons. Consistently applied procedures by the whole school community ensure this successful school runs efficiently and calmly. Students uphold the school's high expectation by their positive attitudes and behavior in class and around the school.

**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 link between monitoring and planning is seamless as the principal and teachers are totally committed to evaluating the progress of individual students and flexibly revising plans and practices. Progress towards whole school goals is evaluated regularly and the outcomes inform the modification of strategic decisions. The principal and teachers monitor attendance, contacts with parents and all aspects of students' personal development and attitudes towards learning as well as their academic progress and performance.. Teachers methodically assess and evaluate students' work against rubrics and expected progress. They record outcomes on students' work electronically and on progress cards. Students' performance in all aspects of the curriculum regularly informs improvements and teaching plans. Students are actively involved in assessing their own progress on assignments against specific rubrics or targets for each subject or aspect of learning.

All student information and comparisons between subjects, grades and classes are discussed at formal meetings to identify and learn from best practice. Immediate action is taken if students fall behind or problems arise. Diagnostic tools are used if students are identified at risk of falling behind and additional suitable support agreed. Staff discuss the effectiveness of interventions and plans which are swiftly adapted, if necessary. Parents receive informative report cards and attend formal meetings with faculty and staff. They uphold and help to shape the principal's vision for the future development of the school and feel confident to approach staff if they are experiencing problems. The rigorous monitoring procedures aimed at achieving this vision ensure the ever-improving effectiveness of this successful school.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>SCHOOL NAME: The Computer 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 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 |   |

| <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?   |          |          |          | 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>                          |