



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Crossroads School

Middle School 246

**243 West 109 Street
New York
NY 10025**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Crossroads School is a middle school with 220 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 41% Black, 54% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 72% eligibility.

The school has had four principals in the past four years, with the current principal beginning in February 2007. The turnover of staff is high, with most in their first three years of teaching. The school employs a significant number of substitute teachers. The school is located on the fifth floor of an old building that serves two other schools. Corridors are very narrow and there is a shortage of meeting rooms, communal spaces and toilet facilities. The cafeteria, which is shared with the other schools, is on the first floor and is reached by a steep and narrow stairwell.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has introduced periodic assessments and is collating the data from them to provide the foundation for goal setting and lesson planning.
- The students feel that most staff support them and encourage them to learn.
- Staff are mutually supportive of each other in the face of the challenges presented by the school.
- Initiatives to improve literacy are beginning to have a positive effect and the school organizes some external visits that students enjoy.
- The inquiry team has a well-judged focus on lower achieving students, is making staff better acquainted with the use of data, and is a model for the way in which staff can work collaboratively.
- The school has sound methods for pursuing absence and lateness.
- Staff are developing ways in which they can build better relationships with students.

What the school needs to improve

- Build an administration that will give the school a clear sense of direction and rekindle trust, respect and unity in the school community.
- Set clear strategic and measurable goals for the school's future and resolutely pursue them.
- Ensure that all students observe basic school routines and arrive at class ready and willing to learn.
- Support teachers in making lessons interesting and well matched to student needs, so that students are engaged in their learning.
- Use data to set goals for individual students and track their progress toward them.
- Improve the quality of the school's physical environment so that it is more supportive of student learning.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made little progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped.

The school's capacity to improve its performance has deteriorated over the past year and is now very weak. The administration is not fully staffed and the school has no senior leadership team. Links with parents remain poor, with no parent teacher association or parent coordinator to help build them up. The staff and parents have lost confidence in the school's leadership and morale is very low, which shows itself in the high number of staff resignations. The day-to-day problems faced by the school makes it hard for the depleted leadership to take long-term strategic decisions, see through new initiatives with resolution and evaluate their impact. One casualty of this has been the very limited progress on five of the six areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous Quality Review.

The staff work very hard but often in isolation and without adequate classroom monitoring and professional support. Many classrooms are unsatisfactory learning environments because the students do not observe basic classroom routines. They often behave badly and make it difficult for each other to learn. Students do not find much of their work interesting or engage wholeheartedly with it. Teachers have not been adequately trained to gather data and use it to set learning goals and align their instruction to them. Too much use is made of worksheets, and many of these do not interest or challenge the students. The tone of the school is made worse by the adverse physical environment, where noise echoes along corridors and the quality of display is very poor.

The school nevertheless has some relatively stronger features. The members of the faculty have a strong bond with each other and students appreciate the efforts most of them make to encourage them to learn. Initiatives to improve literacy, including the appointment of a coach, are beginning to have a positive impact. The school organizes some enjoyable external visits. The gathering of data to track student achievement, one of the areas for improvement in the last Quality Review, is better than a year ago. The well-focused inquiry team has been a model of collaborative working that has helped its members to use data and plan interventions. The recent appointment of a dean has improved support for staff in building better relationships between themselves and students. The procedures to promote attendance are reasonably effective. These are among the potential growth points in the school. It currently lacks the sort of leadership that would rally staff and students and move the school forward from its very depressed position.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school has improved the gathering of data since the previous Quality Review, having put into place the Acuity and Scantron periodic testing systems and the assessments associated with the 100 Book Challenge. The data, which indicates the performance of each student, class and grade, is organized by the data manager into accessible binders. The school has only just started to distribute these to staff and so classroom teachers do not yet add their own day-to-day assessment information to supplement the test scores. The collated whole-school data is not thoroughly analyzed and interpreted so that staff can clearly understand the patterns in the numbers as a springboard for future action. The binders contain a brief aggregation of data by ethnic group and gender, but conclusions are not clearly drawn out by the senior team. Little comparison is made with the performance of other schools, and no intervisitations are in progress. Training and support for the teachers to handle data have been meager except for those in the inquiry team. The members of this team have worked together well and have become better acquainted with how to gather and use test data. They have generated and collated data regularly about the low performing students they have targeted, although this has not been thoroughly analyzed. For example, it is not used to evaluate whether the extra interventions are helping the targeted students to make faster progress than students who do not have this support.

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 underdeveloped.

The school recognizes that it has not yet begun to use data routinely to set measurable academic and other goals for improvement that are shared and understood by the school community. For example, a few staff say there is a goal to increase the proportion of students scoring Level 3 in English language arts and math by 5%, but this is not clearly documented in the Comprehensive Education Plan or elsewhere and is not generally known throughout the school. Where the school does set itself a priority, such as the improvement in the behavior and engagement of students, it is not translated into specific measurable targets.

Students know broadly the test levels they have achieved but they are not set individual goals on the basis of their prior achievement. For example, one male student said that "I scored 3" in math and English language arts and he wanted to "get 4s" next time. But this is a self-generated goal that is not agreed with his teachers as a realistic objective and he has no interim targets to check whether he is on course to achieve his ambition. The goals for special education students, found in their individual education plans, are generally specific, but not in all cases. The school does not communicate precise goals to parents, either for their children's progress or for the school's overarching priorities. Individual teachers try to contact homes where they think this is necessary but links with parents are weak and not systematically developed. This is partly because the school

does not have a parent/teacher association or a parent coordinator. Expectations in the school are low. This is seen in the tolerance of unsatisfactory behavior in many classrooms, the low level of demand in the work that many students are set and the lack of ambitious goals that would assist students in gaining admission to high schools of their choice.

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 underdeveloped.

The school does not provide students with an engaging or challenging education. Many individual teachers work with great commitment to do the best they can and their encouragement of the students is appreciated by them. However, much of this work is done in isolation and staff rarely have detailed pacing calendars and curriculum maps to support them. This is a significant weakness given that the school has to use many substitute teachers who do not therefore have a clear idea of what they should teach. The school has put in place some common features in its daily work so that, for example, most lessons start with an “aim” and “do now”, but there is a high level of inconsistency in the extent to which students pay attention and listen to each other or the teacher. The students’ frequent noisy behavior indicates how they find much of the work dull, driven as it is by uninteresting and undemanding worksheets. Students’ poor work habits inhibit the staff’s confidence in adopting more engaging instructional methods.

With a few exceptions, the quality of the physical environment in classrooms and around the school is poor, with much untidiness and low standards of display. Despite the school’s recent attempt to improve behavior through the Positive Behavior Intervention Program (PBIS), the basic drills required by this are frequently not observed by teachers or students. The quality of social environments is heavily dependent upon the authority of the individual teacher working alone.

Pockets of better instructional practice exist within the school. For example, in a grade 8 English language arts lesson high expectations resulted in a silent reading session that students observed well. The 100 Book Challenge is building a more coherent approach to literacy. The school uses some external contexts to extend class work, as when grade 6 visited Chinatown to enrich its study of Asia. However, the school is not yet at first base in considering how staff might use data to differentiate instruction to meet the different learning needs of students. Attendance has slipped, but not disastrously, and the school has sound systems to check up on lateness or absence. The school does not function harmoniously as a learning community. Students do not feel safe when moving around the school as behavior is too boisterous. The level of trust and respect between the leadership, and faculty and parents, is in disrepair.

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 underdeveloped.

The administration of the school is not properly constituted. The two assistant principals left and have not been replaced. The school does not have a senior leadership team. Certain members of staff have been drafted into the gaps and they do their best but a

gulf has opened up between the leadership and the stakeholders, who have lost their confidence in how the school is run. As evidence of this, morale has plummeted and large numbers of staff have left during the year.

The lack of a proper administration is one reason why classroom observations, both formal and informal, have been very infrequent. Many of the staff are teachers new to the profession and feel that, other than through the informal support they have received from colleagues, little has been done to help them in their new roles. Staff are able to take the initiative to attend professional development sessions out of school but there is not a systematic program of support that is geared to the school's priorities. Partnerships with outside organizations are few in number and do not contribute significantly to the school's work. The recent appointment of a literacy coach, however, is bringing welcome and much needed help to teachers of English language arts.

Some important initiatives have been started but not resolutely followed through. An example of this is the PBIS, which staff and students agree was launched successfully but has been allowed to founder. The appointment of a dean at the start of the year is an exception, as he continues trying to rebuild a sense of community among staff and students.

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 underdeveloped.

The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is a major weakness. The heart of the problem is the lack of a clear and consistent vision of what sort of school this should be, with measurable and well-communicated goals to realize it. The result is that the school does not have a clear framework for its strategic decision taking. The low level of classroom monitoring and the lack of in-depth analysis of performance data mean that the school is not well placed to see what is working and what is not.

The leadership undoubtedly faces many challenges but is too easily overwhelmed by day-to-day concerns and does not stand back and deal firmly with the things that matter most. For example, the most urgent issue in the school right now is the collapse in morale of the staff, but this has not been identified as a priority for action.

Where the school does identify priorities, it does not reliably set out strategies for implementation. As evidence of this, most of the priorities listed in the 2006/07 Comprehensive Education Plan were not acted upon. A plan to guide the school through the current academic year, which has almost ended, has still not been completed. Where decisions are put into action, monitoring and evaluation procedures are weak, as is shown by the lack of assessment of how well PBIS is working. The new systems of periodic assessment have yielded more data on achievement and student progress, but this is not used to assess initiatives, modify goals and adjust plans.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Crossroads School	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