



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Manhattan New School

Elementary School 290

**311 East 82 Street
Manhattan
NY 10028**

Principal: Sharon Hill

Dates of review: November 1- 2, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Chris Andrews

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 New School is an elementary school with 667 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 12% Hispanic, 75% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 15% 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 95.4%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school suffers from a lack of space and of areas in which the students can play and release energy. Imaginative use of small rooms, even decommissioned restrooms, and the school halls allow for small group work or reading recovery. However, the school still has to use the outside street both for recess time and after school, necessitating the closure of the street twice a day.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's commitment to developing life-long learners firmly underpins all of its work.
- The significant and relevant data generated is used to great effect by all teachers, especially in the context of special education students.
- Expectations are very high and are shared by all members of the school community.
- Decisions about the allocation of resources are all data-driven and impact directly on raising student performance.
- Relationships within the school are outstanding and contribute strongly to the success and well-being of the students.
- A flexible program of staff development meets both the needs of the school and the teachers in an exemplary fashion.
- Excellent procedures and systems ensure a school which runs well and develops a positive climate for learning through a focus on student self-discipline.
- The powerful vision for the school is shared by all members of the school community.
- The extended day programs and the excellent work with outside entities are integral to the development of student progress.
- Teachers see themselves as learners as well as teachers and miss no opportunities to enhance their own skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to build on the progress since the last Quality Review in terms of data use in respect of gender groups and other categories of interest.
- Further develop teachers' understanding of the available data to enable them to maximize the benefits from the new assessment and recording procedures.
- Embed the practice of establishing measurable goals and time related benchmarks to track progress for individuals and groups across the year.

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.

Manhattan New School is an exceptional school committed to the development of individual life-long learners. It is held in very high regard by parents and students alike. One parent describes the school as “having a soul to it,” and parents like the school’s constructivist approach, which holds the ideal of individuality as central to student progress. Planning at all levels is excellent and helps offset the difficulties created by limited space. Relationships are outstanding and the use of forenames by teachers and students alike encourages a sense of maturity among the students. This is strengthened by the school’s belief in “self science”, in that students are expected to discipline themselves and behave appropriately. The good behavior in halls and on narrow staircases, and the purposeful atmosphere in classrooms suggests that this approach is very successful. Students enjoy coming to school, like their teachers and are able at all grade levels to articulate this. The quality of instruction at all grades is creating young people with a genuine love of learning, who relish the broadening of their horizons through the integration of many aspects of the curriculum.

Since the last Quality Review, all issues have been addressed and particular progress made in respect of benchmarking and the analysis of raw scores. These developments need time to become embedded fully but the principal recognizes the opportunity to address the needs of those working at or above grade level in a more systematic fashion. The inquiry team is well established and has determined its focus. This reflects the growing sophistication being shown in the use of data by all teachers and the school’s commitment to moving forward all students. Teachers are increasingly using differentiated instruction to meet students’ particular learning needs, but this is not established fully across the whole school. The principal has high expectations of her staff and ensures they receive high-quality professional development. There is a culture of teamwork and collaboration throughout the school, which supports the development of students and faculty alike.

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 generates a significant amount of relevant data, which is used very effectively by teachers, especially in the context of the special education students. Initial data is obtained through conferencing, but there is well-established use of Teacher Centre assessment for grades 3 through 5 and ECLAS for grades 1 and 2. This latter is also used

in kindergarten, and predictive tests are analyzed to show which skill areas need development in all grades. This data provides compelling evidence for the arrangement of students into flexible groups within classrooms. The data collected for use with special education students and English language learners is excellent. It provides the evidence for placements in one of the collaborative team teaching classes in each grade or for the provision of an individual education plan (IEP). The school also provides an effective range of therapies to address particular needs such as speech or physical therapy. The pupil progress team ensures that all students are kept under review and a progress report is made on each IEP four times a year (coincident with the school report cards). This allows goals to be monitored and adapted as necessary. This can and does include decertification. About fifteen students a year are decertified and a sophisticated system ensures that such students make the transition back to general education classes with maximum support. English language learners are routinely encouraged to take part in further extended day activities to expose them to as much English usage as possible.

The school monitors its own progress against some specific schools and within its network, to allow it to investigate examples of good practice from other institutions. In terms of gender and ethnicity, the principal recognizes that this is an area for further development. The measurement of progress among the Level 3 and Level 4 students in all grades is an area where the school has been extremely proactive, and teachers are routinely reviewing raw scores to judge where students have remained within a grade level but have not made a year's progress within that level. Training for teachers in the use of data is ongoing and now focuses on the new systems within the city. There has also been training in the 'All Kinds of Minds' program for all teachers, not just the special education teachers, and this has significantly enhanced their understanding of different learning styles.

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.

Teachers meet regularly in grade teams and in small groups to discuss student progress as well as performance. There are clear benchmarks of three reading levels of progress in any one academic year for reading. At four points in the year, aligned with the school report card, students are reviewed against these. Together, teachers have created the rubrics associated with these benchmarks so there is a school-wide understanding of what constitutes each level. This ensures consistency of approach in terms of assessment and allows for swift intervention to support students identified as "struggling", a term which encompasses students at Level 3 or 4 whose raw scores suggest they are "regressing" or merely "coasting". Extended-day programs therefore include Level 4 students requiring enrichment work as well as similar students requiring "encouragement" not to underperform. This analysis of raw scores is common to reading, writing and math, but the benchmarking for the latter two areas is still "work in progress".

Whole-school goals are well understood by all members of the school community. Parents and teachers speak of developing "life-long learners". Students are aware that they are "learning to learn" and to "know things for the future". There is strong awareness that all students have needs to be met, even if they are already working above grade level. The benchmarks and timescales for assessment and monitoring of progress are linked to the Comprehensive Education Plan and are shared with teachers.

Expectations are very high and are communicated extremely effectively to students and parents who are committed to meeting them. Parents are well informed of their children's goals, as are the students, who comment, "We set our own". They are able to explain what these are and how they would judge if they were met "by looking at my work from over the year to see my improvement" (grade 4 student). Students confirm they get excellent feedback to help this improvement from conferencing, editing notes and peer assessments. This was confirmed by parents, who also found the feedback helpful to them, and by comments on bulletin boards. Students particularly enjoy the opportunities provided by publishing parties and parents equally welcome this chance to reinforce the school's work. Parents also contribute to the school's self-assessment by completing an annual survey, and are positively encouraged to provide any useful information about their children.

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.

School leaders ensure that a relevant, up-to-date and fully integrated curriculum gives students the very best opportunity to make good progress in their learning. There is a flexibility in their use of the curriculum which allows the teachers to tailor it to the needs of their students and their community. For example, science projects link with social studies for fieldwork in Central Park and are structured to develop student literacy. Engagement is achieved in many ways, not least by exposure to experts from groups like the Audubon Society and New York Conservancy. The curriculum is enriched further by visits to museums, through a varied music program and through lunchtime clubs as diverse as chess and knitting.

There are clear lines through which the principal and the administration hold teachers accountable for the progress of their students. It is regular practice to see groups of students pursuing work on a common theme. In one case, a political cartoon from the Revolutionary period was studied by all students but at levels appropriate to their understanding and with questions demanding different levels of critical thinking. Decisions about budgets, staffing and scheduling are based firmly in the data. Resources are focused directly on raising student performance. The carefully planned deployment of substitute teachers to allow intervisitations is an example of this.

The relationships within the school community are outstanding and contribute strongly to the success and well-being of the students. Teachers welcome the visibility of the administration at recess and lunchtimes. The students like to come to school, enjoy their classes and feel safe. Attendance is very good and parents appreciate the "first day call" if they do not report an absence. They also support the absence of rewards for good attendance, as this is expected as part of the development of a student's self-discipline. As one parent explained, "My child does not like to be home, sick".

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 ensures that her teachers receive the professional development that will benefit both them and the school. Their needs are identified by data analysis and from personal interviews with teachers. It is clear that they rightly regard the support given them to be major strength of the school. The supportive nature of relationships within the school ensures that any professional development is turn-keyed throughout the faculty through the common preparation periods. Turn-keying is however not merely an expectation – it is a further reflection of the school’s collaborative culture. Intervisitations are planned in a structured fashion, although teachers also make opportunities for informal observations. All teachers speak very highly of the mentoring given them as teachers new to the school or the profession, which is the result of the principal’s provision and management of a tailored support program. Its impact is clear to see in effective and well-managed classrooms in all grades.

The procedures that ensure that the school runs smoothly are excellent and the focus on developing student self-discipline contributes to the positive climate for learning. Students like and appreciate the “self science” approach to discipline, which involves counseling and discussion. Student personal growth and development is extremely well supported by the partnerships with external agencies, and the integration of these with both the curriculum and the school goals is outstanding. For example, when the social science curriculum has a focus on Mexico, class teaching is accompanied by work in art, with the National Dance Institute providing weekly lessons exploring the same themes. Links with Carnegie Hall and the Manhattan School of Music similarly enhance students’ self-confidence, life skills and musical attributes.

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’s Comprehensive Education Plan provides an effective framework that integrates all elements of the school’s planning. It has measurable expectations and benchmarks for review. These are most developed in reading, where rubrics provide teachers with clear interim goals. It is in this area that development is most focused at present, as the rubrics for both writing and mathematics have been written but not yet implemented. It is characteristic of the principal’s leadership style that she looks for such developments to occur “organically” to allow her teachers to assimilate fully the principles involved before moving forward. The new structure of benchmarked rubrics allows teachers and administrators to analyze programs and the success of strategies used.

There is a range of assessment tools for teachers to identify key areas for intervention and responses, in terms of program modifications, are swift. Appropriate interventions are then implemented as required. The current focus of the school is to target the stronger students who are not making the progress that their prior data suggests is within their capacity. Teachers respond by modifying student groupings, changing the content of the extended day sessions or redesigning specific lesson plans to address these needs. Annual reviews of plans happen in May or June. There are meetings at all levels which feed back to the school leadership team and which then provide the material for the new Comprehensive Education Plan. The concept of cyclical review and evaluation leading to the formation of new goals is well embedded.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Manhattan New School (PS 290)	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 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	