



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Maria Teresa Mirabal School

Middle School 319

**Jumel Place
New York
NY 10023**

Principal: Ysidro Abreu

Dates of review: November 16 - 19, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Jean Mackie

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Maria Teresa is a middle school with 471 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 8.5% Black, 90.0% Hispanic, and 0.8% White students. There is a very small number of Asian and Native American students. The student body includes 28.9% English language learners and 16.3% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 97.7% eligibility.

The school is in its fourth year, with the first cohort of 8th graders graduating this summer.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The dynamic principal is highly respected by the whole school community for his purposeful leadership in driving this very successful school forward.
- The school has built up an exceptional data base of student performance, both academic and personal, which is used continually at all levels to set goals, track progress and inform any necessary interventions.
- There are some very good examples of teachers using data to plan and implement clearly differentiated instruction that includes well-structured opportunities for accountable talk.
- The lively instruction, plus the well-targeted intervention and support programs, all contribute positively to the very good progress that students, including English language learners and special education students, are making.
- Teachers use the widely available technology very well to support teaching and learning.
- Leadership is dispersed throughout the school through the comprehensive meeting schedule at both grade and subject area level, which facilitates the frequent collaborative sharing and evaluation of practice.
- The school uses data very well to monitor teacher performance and provide differentiated professional development according to need.
- The assistant principals and team leaders work effectively with staff to ensure that there is a calm and purposeful climate in classrooms and corridors across all three floors of the school.
- The students' enjoyment of school is reflected by the way they respond so positively to the challenges the teachers set for them and the strong mutual respect shown between students, their peers and adults.
- The parents and students are very proud of the school and value the safe and secure environment in which learning and achievement are the prime foci.

What the school needs to improve

- Build on the good practice of setting goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan by further refining the goals for different subgroups of students.
- Set interim goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan so that progress towards annual goals can be more easily monitored.
- Strengthen the impact of the independent learning centers on progress by ensuring that the language level of the work, especially external sources, is more closely matched to that of the students.

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 outstanding.

The school's mission, 'perseverance, achievement and excellence' underpins everything that it does and is confidently reflected in ambitious goals for all students. The principal provides exceptional leadership and is systematically building capacity so that all staff and students contribute to the sustained growth of the school. A wealth of data has been used to address successfully the recommendations in the previous Quality Review report, as evidenced by increased student progress this year. Additional programs and assessments give more timely feedback on students' progress, enabling more differentiated instruction. The differentiated professional development program provides very good support for all teachers, being particularly effective for staff who are new to teaching or to the school. Good practice is shared frequently, resulting in much high quality teaching which both motivates and challenges students, who are eager to learn and enjoy their classes.

The introduction of a third assistant principal has strengthened the already effective systems that ensure the smooth running of the school. Data is used continually to monitor and evaluate, so that there is a very clear understanding of strengths and improvement needs. This has led to highly innovative focused interventions for all students during 'clinics'. The development of independent learning centers has strengthened student learning further, although there are aspects that now need review. The sense of common purpose and high aspirations produce strong relationships and mutual respect within the whole community. Parents are very pleased with the drive to ensure that their children do as well as they can and welcome the openness and accessibility of the principal and staff.

The inquiry team identified a small group of 7th graders who made the least progress in literacy last year for more focused study and presented outcomes to staff. The team has established a systematic program to gather evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, for monitoring the impact of specific strategies used to support the students. There is a clear rationale for its future work and how findings will inform initiatives more widely. The school recognizes that it is now in a position to refine goal setting for subgroups.

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 outstanding.

The school has a comprehensive database of student performance, both academic and personal, which is used continually at all levels to track progress and target interventions.

This includes detailed analysis of the students' grade 5 test results. The outcomes from an extensive battery of diagnostic assessments are clearly presented. As a result, the principal and staff can see at a glance individual student's starting points, current performance and progress over time. The school tracks performance at class, grade and subject level in similar levels of detail. This data drives all aspects of the school's work, and the staff know and understand every facet of student performance and progress.

The school analyzes diagnostic tests very well to identify weaknesses in skills across all subject areas, but especially in English language arts and math. Additional assessments are undertaken regularly with the large population of English language learners to identify their level of language proficiency and specific skills that are weak. Information is shared across the faculty and with students, so that everyone knows the priorities for teaching and learning. Students with interrupted education are tracked particularly carefully to monitor their acclimatization to the school, as well as their academic progress.

Teachers and support staff closely monitor the progress of special education students towards the goals in their individualized education plans. The level of detail reflects that for English language learners. The school tracks the relative performance of different ethnic groups. Black boys are not doing as well as Hispanic boys, and so the school has put in place a program to strengthen the skills of that group of students. Gender differences are carefully monitored, given the imbalance of boys and girls in the school. The school carefully monitors higher achieving students to ensure that their progress is also sustained. Progress reports and other data sources are used extensively to monitor the school's performance over time and compare results with those of 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 outstanding.

All members of the school leadership team engage in the rigorous and collaborative development of the Comprehensive Education Plan. Clear goals and strategies to reach them are detailed for each subject, so that there is a common understanding of what every department is trying to achieve. These are underpinned by a detailed analysis of data so that basic skills in need of improvement are highlighted across all subjects. However, long term goals for different subgroups are less formally articulated in the plan.

The school uses data very well to set immediate and medium-term student goals. Staff group students into monolingual, bilingual and self-contained classes so that individual needs are met more easily. Within each class the data is used to form small groups and identify additional intervention programs. Groups are hetero or homogeneous, depending on the goals set. The composition of groups changes as goals are met, and new ones are established. Detailed evaluation ensures that teachers set specific, meaningful goals for individual students. Frequent assessment enables teachers to identify quickly whether students are on track or require additional support, which is then provided in a timely manner so that progress is maintained. Special education students are set ambitious goals, which they are helped to achieve through careful scaffolding of their work.

Individual goals are displayed in classrooms and students evaluate their own progress towards them through an easily accessible, color coded system. Students play an active part in both establishing next steps and monitoring progress towards them. They are fully aware of their strengths and can articulate precisely what they need to improve, and how

to do it. Parents are kept very well informed about the school and their children's progress. Communication is wide-ranging and high quality, including calendars and the school's website. Parents are always welcome in the school and take part in monthly learning walks, so that they can see at firsthand what is being achieved in classrooms.

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 outstanding.

The curriculum is, rightly, strongly focused on developing basic literacy and numeracy. These skills underpin all of the core subjects, as well as English language arts and math. Teachers work in departments before the start of the school year to ensure that the program is aligned to State standards and that all subjects are focusing on the skills identified from the data that require reinforcement. Students also have good opportunities to develop broader skills and experiences through dance, art and gymnastics, for example.

Teachers regularly use technology to both motivate and challenge students at all levels. For example, groups use smart boards on well-focused tasks that promote high levels of student interaction. Programs such as Read 180 and Focus on Fluency have enabled special education students and English language learners to make significant progress in their language acquisition and basic literacy skills. Data is used regularly in class for one-to-one conferencing and to form groups of students with similar needs. Focused interventions are provided by the teacher, while other groups work productively on a range of well-targeted tasks. Students make good use of independent learning centers, although some material is not in easily accessible language, limiting the impact.

The cabinet regularly uses interim test data to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum and to hold teachers accountable by discussing the progress of each class with them. The students respond very positively to the challenges that the teachers set them and articulate their ideas with confidence in both group and whole class situations. Examples are evident in monolingual, bilingual and self contained classes. This is as a result of the very positive climate in the building which encourages students to express their ideas in the safe, secure and nurturing environment in which they find themselves.

The principal has systematically built up resources and his faculty to ensure that the school continues to grow. The additional assistant principal post and new literacy programs are good examples of this. Although attendance is well over 90%, the school is not complacent and has rigorous systems in place to chase up absentees and tardiness.

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 outstanding.

The cabinet uses data and frequent classroom visits very well to identify whole school and individual teacher development needs. The school uses a color coded approach, which mirrors that for the students, to track each teacher's individual skill levels. This is then used to plan differentiated professional development goals, ensuring a true learning community for students and staff alike. The technology coach, for example, runs training

at different levels for teachers wanting to improve their smart board skills. Departmental, grade and study group meetings are well structured and, following detailed evaluation of data, focus very closely on identified student and teacher needs.

Inter-visitations and school-made videos are used very effectively to evaluate what works well and where refinements could be made. The high level of professional, collaborative discussion between teachers consolidates the learning taking place. The well-coordinated support from the administration, coaches and department chairs ensures that teachers, especially those new to teaching or new to the school, rapidly develop their instructional practice. This, in turn, is contributing to the very good progress that students are making.

Well-considered and consistently implemented systems and structures ensure the smooth running of the school. Staff, students and parents are all very familiar with routines and expectations. The assistant principals and team leaders ensure that there is a calm and purposeful climate in classrooms and corridors across all three floors of the school. Any minor discipline issues are quickly and effectively dealt with. The school has strong links with its partner school on campus, as well as with a range of other organizations such as the Children's Aid Society. Partnerships are all fully focused on the school's aims of enhancing the life chances of the students and their families within the community.

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 outstanding.

The use of data to monitor and evaluate effectiveness has driven the further improvements made in an already very successful school. This is as true for whole-school initiatives as it is for individual students and for individual staff members. Well constituted teams ensure a shared vision and an absolute commitment to the students' success.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is used well to inform actions for improvement, with specific measurable goals. The administration uses the carefully-structured meeting schedule to ensure that the various staff groups meet regularly to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. The system is robust, with data always forming the basis for discussions and review. There is a good sense of what constitutes appropriate progress towards the goals established, but plans do not contain formal interim goals which would help the school to monitor progress towards annual goals more systematically.

Periodic assessments are used regularly to identify progress with key skill areas and inform the focused interventions for students. The impact of this is especially evident during school 'clinics'. These take place at strategic times during the year. The schedule for the day is adjusted so that all students attend a program of four clinics, each focused on a particular skill area. Each class is homogeneously grouped so that the clinic is provided at an appropriate level of challenge. Social studies and science teachers work alongside their math and literacy colleagues to co-teach these sessions. All students, including high achievers, are provided with well-targeted interventions. The outcomes of clinics and other interventions either at individual, class or subject level, are used very well by the school to inform the next stage of goal setting and actions to be taken. The school is very good at using its data to respond flexibly and rapidly to students' needs and subsequently adjust its goals and the actions needed to meet them. In the same way, it uses its continual evaluations of teachers to modify the support for them and to adjust their goals for the future.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Maria Teresa Mirabal School	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?					X
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?					X
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?					X
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?					X
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2					X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▶	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?					X
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?					X
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?					X
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?					X
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3					X

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▶	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?					X
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?					X
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?					X
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?					X
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					X
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?					X
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	▶	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?					X
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?					X
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?					X
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?					X
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?					X
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X