



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**New York City Lab School for Collaborative
Studies**

Middle School 312/High School 412

**333 West 17 Street
New York
NY 10011**

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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

The New York City Lab School is a combined middle and high school serving students from grade 6 through grade 12. The middle school has an enrolment of 580 students, with boys accounting for 53% and girls accounting for 47% of its population. The high school has an enrolment of 513 students, with boys accounting for 44% and girls accounting for 56% of its population. The middle school comprises 5% Black, 10% Hispanic, 44% White, and 40% Asian students. The high school comprises 10% Black, 11% Hispanic, 53% White, and 25% Asian students. There are approximately 12% of special education students across the two schools. Fewer than 1% of the students are English language learners. The average attendance rate for 2006 - 2007 was 97.8% for the middle school and 95.9% for the high school. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school is a screened option school, serving both highly academic and special education students through a well-established inclusion model. The current principals have been in post for just over eighteen months. Eleven staff have joined the school this year, including a newly appointed assistant principal and a data specialist.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principals are providing clear instructional leadership and have established effective management systems to ensure that the school runs smoothly.
- There is clear evidence of collaboration, one of the core principles of the school, between all members of the community.
- Data is being used increasingly effectively to target support for students where it is most needed.
- The inclusion model of the school is proving beneficial for all students, but especially those with special needs.
- There are some good examples of lively, imaginative teaching which engages students and challenges them to apply their knowledge to new situations.
- The strong relationships in the school underpin the mutual respect shown between students, their peers and adults.
- The principals have established a good understanding of strengths and areas for development and have already made well judged decisions to modify programs in the light of evaluation.
- Good opportunities are provided for teachers to meet collaboratively both at grade and department level.
- The school is providing some well-focused professional development which is very well informed by whole school and individual needs.
- Parents and students value the caring and nurturing climate within the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue the work started to establish greater uniformity of practice in the collection of data to monitor and track student performance.
- Build on the periodic assessment processes to establish greater rigor and consistency in the use of rubrics across grades and within departments.
- Use periodic assessment data more systematically to identify key skill deficiencies in a timely fashion and inform differentiated instruction.
- Continue the leadership professional development program to ensure that key players within the school have the skills necessary to monitor and evaluate practice and implement change.
- Use data more systematically to set both interim and annual goals so that the school can more easily benchmark its work and the subsequent impact on student outcomes.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principals provide clear and purposeful leadership. They are striving to sustain the founding principles of the school, while at the same time ensuring that students' needs are fully met. The school has actively tackled the issues from the last Quality Review. The new swipe card system for tracking attendance has been successful and figures remain strong for both schools. The school is continuing to focus on the use of data to inform planning and strengthen differentiated instruction. It is aware that more needs to be done to share the current good practice. The inquiry team has been a positive force for embedding periodic assessments across the school but implementation remains variable. Procedures for ensuring greater consistency in general assessment practice are developing positively. The cabinet is working steadily towards a longer-term strategic plan. The present plan, although detailed, does not have quantitative interim or annual targets, which hampers the school's ability to monitor progress towards its goals.

The school is increasing the rigor with which progress and achievement data is collected and analyzed. It has used the data to identify students who need additional support and to evaluate the impact of its curriculum. Changes have been made to programs as a result. Positive steps are being taken to identify skill deficiencies but this is not yet consistent across the school. Teaching is often stimulating and challenging. The strong focus on collaboration is evident in many classes, with students regularly sharing ideas. Teachers in co-taught classes effectively support the wide range of needs within their group. Relationships are very positive throughout the school. The principals have applied their understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement to establish a very well-focused professional development program. Their approach to tracking the growth of the staff acts as a good model for monitoring the progress of students. The leadership program provides valuable support for staff with responsibilities, as not all have developed the skills necessary to fulfill their role with the rigor required.

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 proficient.

The school gathers a wide range of data to support its understanding of student performance and progress. Overall achievement is scrutinized through the analysis of State test data, Regents results and graduation rates. The school also uses interim data from each marking period to identify students who are underachieving and those that are at risk of not meeting grade requirements. The guidance team carefully monitors credit accumulation and progress towards graduation. In this way, the administration has an

overview of achievement at individual, class, grade and subject level. The school has strong team structures for supporting special education students and these ensure that progress towards individualized education plans is closely monitored on a regular basis. The progress of the small number of English language learners is similarly carefully checked. The school knows where there are achievement gaps between boys and girls and different ethnic groups. It is particularly eager to explore further the progress of higher achieving Black girls, which is not as strong as expected. English results, especially those for higher achievers, have declined over time. This is now a major goal for improvement. The school compares its performance with others in its network and visits schools with a similar student population.

Teachers gather a range of data, including homeworks and assignments, regarding the progress of students in their classes. The development of portfolios and the use of the school writing rubric with periodic assessments are positive steps. At present, however, there remains variability of practice in the collection and presentation of data, which is hampering teachers' ability to track progress in a consistent way. This is also resulting in some variations in expectations of what students can achieve. Several departments have undertaken careful diagnostic analyses to identify specific skill deficiencies, in mathematics for example. This process is developing more widely but is not yet firmly embedded across the school.

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 proficient.

The school has used its well-developed collaborative approach to identify two main overarching goals for the whole student body and specific goals for the middle and high school grades. Both quantitative and qualitative data have been scrutinized carefully to inform this process. The goals, however, while appropriate, are broad and lack specificity with regard to anticipated impact on student outcomes.

The school is using data increasingly effectively to target support for students where it is most needed. Additional intervention through small group and after school sessions is provided for those students who require more time to consolidate their literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers and support staff collaborate effectively to ensure that special education students make good progress towards their individualized targets. The school also scrutinizes social and emotional data as well as academic information so that individual action plans can be drawn up for students at risk. Performance data is increasingly being used to support older students in their selection of courses to ensure that each program fully matches individual needs. Counselors also meet with high school students to discuss credit accrual and progress towards graduation.

Teachers, in grade team and departmental meetings, articulate their aspirations for the students, through discussions about individuals and program planning. Students are eager to do well and be successful. They are not always clear, however, about their specific goals and what they have to do to improve. Parents value the reports that they receive about their child's progress and the more frequent communication that they have with some teachers. Narratives that teachers send home regarding progress, while informative, lack consistency in presentation and detail, reflecting variable practice across the school. The administration is, rightly, looking to strengthen processes to ensure greater consistency and coherence in the use of data to set goals at overall school, department, grade and student level.

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 proficient.

The middle and high school departments have developed curriculum maps covering the essential skills, knowledge and understanding for each content area and course. The curriculum, which is informed by State standards, is often accelerated so that it meets the needs of the school population more closely. Students in grade 8, for example, cover concepts that are required for the Math A Regents exam. The high school program offers a suitable range of courses, including a number of advanced options, to underpin graduation requirements. The school has increased the range of mathematics courses so that students’ needs can be more closely met. The inclusion model of collaborative team teaching classes, skills classes and extended day programs provide a rich environment in which all students have equal access to a broad and challenging curriculum. In addition, the school has developed a number of exciting projects, which extend the students’ experiences further. Ninth graders, for example, have produced some very high quality art work as a result of this initiative. The wide range of clubs also provides invaluable enrichment opportunities.

Teachers meet with the principals to discuss plans for the year and are held accountable for the outcomes of their classes. Lessons are often well paced, with a good range of activities, which engage and challenge the students to develop their understanding. The collaboration between students is impressive, with frequent dialogue taking place. The additional staffing in the co-taught classes facilitates this particularly well. Practice is variable, however, with missed opportunities for further differentiation, especially for higher achievers. The principals have made some astute financial and staffing decisions. They have created new posts such as assistant principal and dean of students. Office space has been reconfigured so that all staff can communicate more easily. These steps have helped to consolidate further the strong relationships and mutual respect shown between students, their peers and adults. The school has very secure systems for promoting good attendance and punctuality.

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 principals, assistant principal and the staff developers regularly visit classrooms to establish an overview of instructional quality. They have a good understanding of strengths and individual needs, which has been used well to inform the professional development program. Each teacher has a portfolio, recording foci for support, actions taken and next steps. The administration use this well to monitor growth in teaching practice. The program at whole school level is well aligned to current priorities. The leadership program is particularly important as not all staff with responsibilities have developed the skills necessary to fulfill their roles with the necessary rigor. Teachers value the professional development that they receive and the constructive feedback about practice. They meet regularly at grade and department level to discuss what has worked well and where improvements are needed. Practice is also shared through intervisitations, both formal and informal. New teachers are paired with seasoned teachers and have quickly been inducted into the routines and practices of the school.

The principals have introduced new posts, such as a dean and program manager, which have had a significant impact on the support provided to students as they move through the school. These individuals, along with the guidance team, college advisor and teachers, work effectively together to ensure that students receive well-coordinated support for both their personal and academic needs. These structures also ensure that the school runs very smoothly and that any behavioral incidents are dealt with promptly. The school has a very wide range of partnerships with higher education institutions and local organizations which provide invaluable enrichment for both students and teachers.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principals have a good understanding of strengths and areas for development in the school. They are very ambitious for the students and have clearly identified priorities for the future. At present, the overall goals are not underpinned by specific quantifiable targets or interim measures which would help the school to monitor its progress more systematically. The various meeting structures do, however, ensure that the work of the school is regularly scrutinized and evaluated. Parents and students make valued contributions, reflecting the school's vision and culture. The principals have made significant changes to the school's organizational structure and the master program having reviewed performance data and other qualitative information. The Regents living environment and chemistry courses have been realigned, for example, to support the drive for higher achievement.

Data is used regularly to inform targeted interventions for individual students identified as at risk and adjustments are made to programs in the light of evaluation. The individualized education plans for special education students are also regularly reviewed and updated as students' progress towards their targets. The teachers in the co-taught classes frequently confer and adjust approaches whenever the need arises. Similar discussions take place at grade and department meetings. There is a positive drive within the school to focus much more on the impact of teaching on learning and this is requiring significant adjustments on the part of some teachers. The determination of the principals to embed this approach and build on the creativity of the staff for the benefit of the students is commendable. There is good capacity in the school for further improvement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME:	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies					
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

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped