



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Springfield Gardens Middle School

Middle School 059

**189- 98 Ridgedale Street
Queens
NY 11413**

Principal: Carleton Gordon

Dates of review: October 12 - 16, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Kenneth Thomas

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Springfield Gardens is a middle school with 883 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 94% Black, 4% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 53% eligibility.

The school is organized into three curriculum-based academies. These are the Lewis Latimer Academy of Math and Science, Gregory Hines Academy of Performing Arts, and Maya Angelou Academy of Literature and Journalism. The academies occupy separate floors of the building and share specialist resources.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides the school with determined and thoughtful leadership, and an unwavering commitment to the students in his charge.
- The effective use of data provides administrators with a clear understanding of students' progress and achievement.
- The three academies provide students with a close learning community in which they are well known and receive good support and guidance.
- Relationships are good and there is an environment of mutual trust between adults and students.
- Most lessons are calm and orderly because the school's behavioral norms are clearly understood and rigorously implemented.
- Parents and students appreciate the strong commitment of teachers and their desire to do the best they can for their students.
- The curriculum is carefully aligned to students' interests and is enriched by the arts and a variety of extra-curricular activities.

What the school needs to improve

- Raise teachers' expectations of students' capabilities and develop and implement instructional strategies that motivate and engage students more actively in lessons.
- Develop teachers' assessment techniques so that the ongoing assessment of students' progress is a regular feature of all lessons.
- Ensure that teachers make more effective use of data to produce and implement well developed lesson plans that reflect differentiated learning activities.
- Implement strategies to ensure that teachers' inter-visitations are systematic and have a demonstrable impact on instruction and students' learning.
- Develop school planning processes at whole school and classroom level further.

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 proficient.

Springfield Gardens is a school that is continuing to improve rapidly. Parents, students and staff all recognize that, because of the dedicated work of the principal and good support from his assistant principals, the school has been transformed over the last four years. As one parent said, “The school has changed enormously. Parents are now involved working alongside the principal and teachers ... this is a great community school.” Students really like coming to the school and benefit from the varied curriculum. This is seen in their willingness to work, positive attitudes and regular attendance. Within the three academies, the climate for learning is very positive, and all members of the school community care for and support each other.

Good progress has been made to address the issues identified in the previous Quality Review. Data is now managed and analyzed more effectively and predications of student achievement are more accurate and realistic. Steady progress is being made in the school’s effort to encourage more parents to participate actively in their children’s education. Some progress has been made with regard to the teachers’ use of data in planning differentiated learning activities, but more needs to be done in this area.

In some instances, teachers’ expectations are too low and there is a need to ensure that students are more actively engaged in lessons. There is a need to focus teachers’ inter-visitations more sharply in order to improve instruction. There is also a continuing need to enhance teachers’ skills in assessing the progress students make in lessons. The inquiry team is being established to extend the work of existing staff teams by providing additional in-depth information on progress and performance.

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 is committed to developing its use of data to improve the opportunities available for students. The school collects a good range of data on students and more effective use is being made of this information to monitor their progress and achievement. The principal and assistant principals are driving this effort effectively. A review timetable is in place that enables student achievement to be tracked at regular intervals. This provides information that guides instructional planning so that any areas of underperformance can be addressed.

Particularly effective use is made of data to plan appropriate interventions for lower-attaining students in English language arts and math. A measure of the success of this work is the increased progress made by special education students and those who are English language learners. However, the school acknowledges that the effectiveness with which teachers use this information to inform their planning varies too greatly. Specific training on the use of data is an ongoing process and further training is planned for this year. Nonetheless, senior leaders are effective in ensuring that modifications are made to programs as indicated by the analysis of data. This is having a positive impact that is seen, for example, in the rise in the school's performance in English language arts and math.

An inquiry team is in the process of being established. The remit of this team is to explore data more fully in order to strengthen the drive for further improvements in instructional practice. The team has broad membership and includes a new data specialist teacher. This position has been created to lead analyses and support teachers in their use of evaluation findings.

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 is making good progress in its use of data to plan for improvement. The academy structure facilitates collaboration in planning both within and across grades. The school now has a clear plan for long-term improvement. The administration sets whole-school goals for improvement that are informed by good consultation with staff and parents. The principal and assistant principals communicate high expectations of what can be achieved and this is reflected in the school's goals for improvement. These goals are objectively measurable and have appropriate timeframes and success criteria. However, these high expectations and structured planning are not always apparent at the classroom level. The administration is aware of these inconsistencies and recognizes the need to address this. This is particularly important in relation to the school's ability to meet the needs of middle-attaining students who, too frequently, do not receive enough challenge in lessons.

The school is very effective in identifying and addressing the needs of students with greatest need. The school gives high priority to the development of students' reading and writing skills and uses data to identify the reading levels that students should achieve. This is helping to raise students' achievement in these key skills and can be seen, for example, in their creative writing.

Parents say that the school has an open door policy and that if they voice a concern, teachers respond right away. Parents are particularly appreciative of the commitment that teachers show to their children and the extra time they are prepared to spend helping them in their studies. The school does a good job of informing parents about the goals that are set so that they are able to help their children make as much progress as possible. In addition to regular meetings with parents, the school's 'help involve parents' (HIP) computer and telephone generated system makes communication between the school and home much easier. Parents say that they like the system because it allows them to have accurate and up to date information about their children's work and progress. Through the system, parents are also able to provide the school with information about the particular needs of 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 proficient.

The school provides a broad curriculum that offers students a diversity of curricular opportunities. The school strives to ensure that tasks and activities match the needs and capabilities of the students through its differentiated curriculum. This is mainly through the academy structure that enables students to specialize in math and science, performing arts, or literature and journalism. Students say that they like the way the academies provide for their particular talents and interests. Students appreciate the opportunities they are given during the school day and after school. Their increased enjoyment in coming to school is reflected in a high attendance rate with very little tardiness.

Staffing, budgeting and scheduling decisions are based on the careful analysis of data to support the achievement of the school's goals. This is seen, for example, in the effective way data is used to create after school and Saturday intervention programs. The school also provides teachers with a strong body of assessment data so that they can develop lesson plans that take account of students' individual needs through a range of differentiated learning activities. Many teachers use this data well to present students with engaging and challenging activities that are well matched to their attainment levels. However, in too many lessons teachers' planning does not take account of students' different achievement levels. As a result they are not always provided with the right level of challenge. In these lessons, available time is not used efficiently because some students have to wait for others to catch up. Further, many teachers do not use assessment techniques that enable them to check students' progress during the course of a lesson. Where they are used, these techniques enable teachers to identify where additional support is needed in order to accelerate progress.

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.

Parents and staff agree that the school has been transformed over the last four years. The school is now stable and provides a well-organized, calm and caring environment in which individual students feel respected. The number of behavior issues in classrooms and around the school has dropped sharply and any that do arise are dealt with quietly and effectively. Students are ready to learn and the vast majority is willing to work hard for their teachers. This change in culture is primarily because of the positive impact the principal has on the atmosphere of the school.

The principal, with good support from his assistant principals, is determined that every student should achieve the best possible education and has a highly visible presence in the school. He is constantly in classrooms and in hallways, greeting staff and students, asking questions, checking that all is well, and encouraging everyone to strive to do their best. It is a real pleasure to observe his warm and friendly, but purposeful, interactions with students. Students appreciate the way he goes about his work. As one student said "he doesn't just sit behind a desk, he is involved with us ... last year he came down and served us lunch!"

Regular observations of classroom teaching, made by the principal and assistant principals, are fully integrated in the school's work. These are linked to well-structured professional development that addresses areas where improvement is needed. The teachers appreciate the feedback that they receive from the principal and his assistants and the process enhances the school's capacity for improvement. Meeting time for faculty to review progress and plan strategies for improvement helps to increase teachers' accountability for their professional development. These are essential tools in accelerating learning as are the inter-visitations among teachers to observe good instructional practice that take place. However, many of these inter-visitations are not structured in a way that allows systematic feedback leading to a demonstrable impact on instruction and students' learning. Those who are new to the profession receive good support from the administration and from colleagues. The school is proactive in seeking out and developing external partnerships that give the school good capacity to continue to improve the wellbeing and achievement of the 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 proficient.

The principal has set forth his vision very clearly and has worked hard to bring about the commitment of staff, students and parents to the common purpose. The school makes effective use of the Comprehensive Education Plan as a working document, and progress towards strategic goals is monitored. Regular meetings take place between the principal and assistant principals in which interim assessment data is used to identify achievement gaps so that appropriate action can be taken. This includes identifying the changes in practice necessary to achieve improvements in student learning. For example, the school reviews the progress of special education students regularly and adjusts individual programs according to need.

Teachers receive good data on the achievement of their students and guidance on how they can use this information in their planning to reach established goals. The school recognizes that more work needs to be done in order to ensure that all teachers use this information to plan actions that lead to measurable outcomes.

The principal and senior colleagues use their detailed knowledge of student performance to plan priorities for further improvement. The wider membership of the inquiry team is well poised to extend this capacity and to accelerate progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Springfield Gardens Middle School (MS 59)	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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		