



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Marie Curie

**Middle School 158
46-35 Oceania Street
Queens
NY 11361**

Principal: Marie Nappi

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Lead reviewer: Mick Megee

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Marie Curie is a middle school with 1149 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 8% Black, 14% Hispanic, 21% White and 57% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 8% 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 96%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The well-being of each individual is at the heart of everything that this caring and welcoming school does.
- The principal ensures that students have a calm, productive and well-organized learning environment in which they are expected to do well.
- Parents and students are proud of their school and families appreciate the many steps the staff take to exchange information about how well their children are doing.
- The high-quality curriculum fully engages the students and gives them many rich opportunities to make good progress.
- The teachers are skilful at making learning enjoyable so that students want to do their best.
- The principal has built up very strong, trusting relationships throughout the school that have a significant and positive effect on pupils' social and academic well-being.
- Specialist staff provide very good support to all those students who require it.
- The school offers its staff good professional development, and is excellent in supporting those who are new to the school or to teaching.
- The principal has introduced good measures to reduce tardiness and to sustain the very good level of attendance.
- All the staff, parents and students share the principal's clear vision for the future.

What the school needs to improve

- Put in place effective systems to periodically measure and analyze the performance and progress made by the different groups of students within the school.
- Set measurable performance goals with interim milestones for whole school, grades, classes and groups, with a clear link to teachers' professional development.
- Put in place effective systems for evaluating whether the school has successfully achieved its goals.

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.

This school welcomes and cares for each of its students. The principal does her utmost to use her very good management and attention to individual detail to ensure that students feel secure and are eager to learn. Parents and students are greatly appreciative of all the school does. Teachers are successful at providing engaging lessons for students through the school's high quality and broad curriculum. New and experienced teachers are well supported by good professional development, although opportunities for peer classroom observation are not provided consistently for all teachers. While the school is effective in gathering data about individual students, classrooms and grade levels it does not track the progress of different subgroups of students. Goal setting for individual students is consistent, yet it is not as developed for whole school, classes, subjects, grades and other subgroups of students. The school plans to address these issues during this school year.

The school has addressed the issues from the last Quality Review. It has improved the collection of individual information about students. Teachers use the workshop model regularly in lessons, and performance scores in math examinations have improved. The school has appointed a data analyst and has already set up the inquiry team, which is ready for its first meeting.

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.

Staff work very hard to collect information on individual students, but the information that the school gathers on the progress of the different groups of students within the school is limited. The school has good conferencing procedures so that staff involve students periodically in conversations about their performance so far and the next steps that students need to take. Students typically say, "The feedback is very fair and it always helps you to improve." The focus on the individual is particularly beneficial to special education students and English language learners. Staff track the progress of these students closely and put into place the right resources and staffing to help them make as much progress as other students within the school.

The school has just begun to turn its attention to the progress made by the different groups within the school. Although information on this is limited, individual staff have already taken some steps in the right direction. They have instituted action research into the

underachievement of a number of students who are struggling. They have gathered information about the performance, but not yet the progress, of students in similar schools. The staff recognize the importance of collecting more detailed information and are gearing themselves up to undertake more intensive work over the next year.

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.

Goal setting for individual students is strong but the goal setting for whole school, subjects, classes, grades or for subgroups of students is not yet fully effective. Staff set every student’s individual goals for each core subject through the conferencing system. Staff skillfully monitor and revise the next steps required to provide ever-greater challenges through mini-lessons. This system is tight and students achieve well because of it. This is particularly the case for students who are struggling and who require additional support.

The school adopts a particularly effective case-conference approach for students who are causing concern. Weekly meetings of senior staff and support agencies take place to discuss their concerns and to determine goals and strategies. These meetings bring about rapid improvement because all staff are able to take a common and consistent approach.

Staff set goals annually in each subject through an education development plan. However, these goals are often too broad to be easily evaluated by the administration or are stated in terms of strategies rather than outcomes for students. The school is beginning to put structures in place to enable it to set measurable goals for individual subjects and for different groups of students and the whole school. Currently the school is at too early a stage for these measures to have had an impact, although it is well placed to do so over the next year. Teachers recognize and value the benefits that better information will bring. As one said, “It’ll be great to really tune into students’ needs.”

The staff work in very effective partnership with parents. They provide full information about the progress of each student and seek from the families any further helpful information. The parent coordinator makes a good contribution to sustaining and promoting these relationships. Parents particularly welcome the high expectations that the school has established for both academic and personal development. One parent said, “My son loves it here. But there is no way that he can sleepwalk through his lessons. He is challenged every step of the way.”

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 really exciting curriculum that provides students with a wide range of opportunities for achievement. This is enhanced by the tremendously positive relationships that exist throughout the school. However the school makes relatively limited use of information about the achievement of groups in planning instruction and in making financial decisions.

The curriculum offers a great variety of opportunities to students whatever their interests and aspirations. For example, there are very good facilities for dance, playing in a band, computer work, or playing bridge. Parents and students talk enthusiastically about what choices are available, although they say that one or two classes are unable to attend gym because of their very full timetable. School corridors abound with the vibrant colors of the art displays. The students' artistic efforts are recognized citywide and the students' paintings have been selected for exhibition on buses to the airport. The school goes out of its way to welcome and include special education students on the same campus.

Teachers work hard and are successful in bringing instruction alive despite the limited availability of new technology, such as interactive whiteboards, in classrooms. Band classes are a good example of dynamic, expert teaching bringing about rapid progress and, for some struggling students, providing terrific boosts to their self-esteem. Teachers are increasing their skills in differentiating instruction to match students' individual capabilities. Teachers do not yet offer a sufficiently wide range of written materials, such as worksheets, so that every student can develop independence as a learner as quickly as possible.

Everywhere around the school, students and staff relate happily and respectfully to one another. The students say that bullying is not present at all. It is clear that the principal and her team have successfully gained the commitment of everyone towards the shared values of trust, sensitivity and appreciation. This positive environment, along with strong procedures supports the school's high attendance rate.

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 school's professional development programs provide staff with good opportunities to improve their skills and understanding in relation to the needs of individual students. However, staff are not yet provided with a secure analysis of the needs of different groups within the school. This would enable them to plan instruction even more effectively.

The school offers its staff good opportunities to share good practice, especially through their voluntary participation in peer observation and critiques. Many teachers enthusiastically take up the opportunities in those subjects where it is offered, but this is not a consistent feature of the school for all subjects or for all teachers.

Teachers who are new to the profession or new to the school are made to feel at home very quickly. They receive excellent support from the administration and from their colleagues particularly through "teaching buddies". They say how much this has helped them to improve professionally. For more experienced teachers, the administration has a supportive program of formal lesson observations, and teachers receive comprehensive feedback that they value highly.

The school has developed good partnerships with outside agencies such as local museums and libraries, which are used well to promote students' achievement. The link with Queens Library has resulted in an exciting history writing project involving the students working alongside older members of the local community.

The school makes good use of an array of specialist staff who work together with the teachers to provide strong support for any student who needs it. They meet together regularly and discuss individual students who are causing concern. The principal takes a lead role in these discussions. Her presence ensures that there are consistent strategies applied to a common goal. The principal runs a very tight ship with very good day-to-day administration. She has been effective in creating a learning environment of respect and trust, where everyone's contribution is valued.

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 sets out her vision clearly and has gained the commitment of the whole school community to a common purpose. School wide development planning, although proficient, is not yet as effective as it could be. The lack of precision in defining outcomes for students hinders the administration's ability to drive forward with the next stage of planning improvements.

Teachers effectively monitor and track individual students' progress through regular conferences, and use this information well to set the next steps in learning. They do this alongside the students so that students themselves know how well they have done, and what challenges they need to undertake to assist their achievement. The school is reasonably effective at adjusting its practices whenever it detects individual underachievement.

At a wider school level, however, goals do not always contain measurable success criteria. Often, they list strategies for teachers to adopt rather than pinpointing the gains that students are expected to attain. Where the criteria are measurable, they are sometimes too broad to be of use. This means that the school does not have a very precise understanding of where students are and how much the school still needs to do in order for them to get to where they need to be. The school is aware of the need to improve in this area, and has plans to do so over the next period. Staff are about to receive training on the use of predictive assessments, and the newly appointed data analyst is beginning to provide guidance and support to the faculty team.

Nevertheless, the principal has been successful in bringing everyone together around a shared set of values, and all staff are committed to making things even better for the students. Parents recognize that all the staff are working hard to obtain the very best for their children. As one parent said, "She gets everybody on board. She's a great lady."

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Marie Curie (MS 158)	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 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		