



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The School of Performing Arts

Middle School 217

**977 Fox Street
Bronx
NY 10459**

Principal: Marvin Reid

Dates of review: May 15 - 16, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Jill Myers

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School for Performing Arts is a middle school with 350 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 24% Black, 71% Hispanic, 2% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 76.4% eligibility.

The school occupies the first and second floor of a building that also houses a charter school and another middle school that is being phased out. The principal of sixteen years retired in June 2007 and a new principal began in July of the same year.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The new principal has identified the school's strengths and has set goals for the upcoming year.
- Students speak warmly about their teachers' and principal's efforts to help them to learn and the positive relationships they have with them.
- Parents feel welcomed in the school and are well informed about their children's education.
- There is a strong sense of trust and mutual respect throughout the school.
- There are good structures and systems in place for monitoring students' attendance.
- Students and parents believe there is an improvement in tone and safety of the school.
- Informally teachers and coaches work together to support each other's professional growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve teachers' understanding and use of data to guide their teaching and plan for differentiated instruction.
- Create more effective systems of collating data to inform strategic goal setting decisions.
- Use the data to establish benchmarks, timelines and formative assessments effectively in the goal setting process.
- Effectively utilize information about low achieving students to identify coherent strategic interventions.
- Develop greater coherence and accountability of delivery of differentiated professional development.

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.

Under the leadership of the new principal parents are made to feel very welcomed in the school and enjoy the new “open door policy”. There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect between staff and students. All of this makes for a safe and positive tone in the school.

There are effective procedures for maintaining good attendance. Parents are called daily if their children are absent or late to school. For long term absences home visits are made and there has been success in ‘bringing’ extended absence students back to school and providing a support system for them. The new principal has worked hard this year to create partnerships with outside arts organizations to strengthen the theme of the school. This year students were able to make several trips to a morning television show and it is intended that this initiative is to continue. In the fall there are plans for the school to be working with Jazz at Lincoln Center and Ballet Hispanico.

As recommended in the previous Quality Review the school has worked to raise the quality of writing across the school. A number of professional development workshops have been held to support teachers’ understanding of the writing process and all subject areas now include at least one writing project each week. Another recommendation was to strengthen differentiation of instruction and though there has been professional development delivered to address this issue it is only just emerging in teachers’ instructional planning.

Goals are general in nature and lack specific, measurable, time sensitive benchmarks. There are major issues with the infrastructure of the shared school building and this has led to an inability to have full access to technology. Although data is collected in many forms it is not synthesized into one central location. This limits the ability to make informed decisions or to effectively compile information on groups or ascertain trends.

Information from State exams is used to identify low achieving students who are invited to attend the extended day program. Although the most struggling students receive academic intervention services during the school day there is not a clear process for developing individual goals.

The inquiry team’s focus is to investigate reading comprehension deficiencies in seventh grade students. Progress is measured by using the results of the Acuity assessments but this information is not readily accessible.

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 describes its use of data and assessment tools as a work in progress. There is a data wall in the principal's office with the results of the State exams over time divided by subgroups. Analysis of this indicated the downward trend of English language arts scores and thus why this became a focus for the year. The principal has contacted similar schools to identify ways they have improved student achievement in this area. The school does not have student data compiled in one central system and records are handwritten. The school plans to hire a data specialist to create such a system so that data can readily be analyzed as a means of measuring student performance and progress by class, grade and subgroups.

Every student has an academic assessment and intervention folder in which teachers collect administered assessments and record results. The ability to use this information is limited, though some professional development has been delivered in the area of data analysis. There are plans to expand these efforts to train the staff to be able to make more comprehensive and sophisticated data analyses.

Due to programming constraints teachers do not have common planning time where they can share data. However, the special education and English language learner teachers share information about students receiving their services regularly with the general education teachers. Next year, there are plans to create a program that allows for common meeting time by department so that a coherent and uniform practice of analysis of student progress can be tracked by class, grade and subgroup.

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.

There is a new "open door" policy this year and parents state they have taken advantage of it and have never felt before so welcomed at a school. Students are pleased with the monthly 'town hall' sessions where they get to meet with just the principal. They feel he really listens to them.

Performance data from the State exams is used to identify the low achieving students. These students are invited to attend the extended day program. In addition, those who are the most struggling students receive academic intervention services during the school day. There is not an articulated process for developing individual goals and instructional plans and this impairs the ability to track progress as well as determining effectiveness of either program.

Meetings are used to discuss administrative issues and the delivery of professional development. There is not a system in place for teachers to develop uniform

assessments that can be used to set rigorous goals with established time frames. This has hampered purposeful planning. The school does not have clear, time-bound, measurable goals with concrete success criteria, along with the plans to achieve such goals.

Teachers provide parents with good information about how well their children are doing through regular consultation. The administration does not presently share the school goals, with parents or the community.

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 administration makes budgeting decisions based on identified needs. Raising English language arts scores was the primary goal for the year and thus funds were allocated to hire a full time mentor and literacy coach in order to improve the delivery of instruction in this area. Keeping with the need to support all teachers, money was set aside to send math and science teachers to national conferences. Positively, the math teacher said she learned a lot from that opportunity and was able to turnkey new ideas to others in her department.

There is an environment of trust and respect between staff and students to support personal and academic development. Students feel that teachers provide learning opportunities that will help them to be successful and encourage them “not to give up but to keep trying”.

The principal has identified that most teachers are at the beginning stages of understanding how to plan for differentiated lessons. In a class where students were seated in groups and engaged in collaborative activities all groups were given the same task. In all other classes, lessons are teacher directed and everyone receives the same assignments. Although there is some leveling of books in the classroom libraries, students stated that they are not given direction to help them to choose books from the difficult or easy sections.

A few members of the instructional cabinet have created an English language arts pacing calendar that has been distributed at the beginning of the year to help ensure that students are prepared for the next grade. Recently a curriculum map has been added that is based on the New York State standards.

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 proficient.

The principal and assistant principal make frequent visits to classrooms and provide oral and written feedback. Teachers feel comfortable going to the coaches and the mentor to ask for help with instruction, curriculum development and lesson planning. However, there is no system for analyzing and recording information gathered which makes it

more difficult for others to learn from good advice. There are plans to align professional development services closely with the development of school wide goals, benchmarks and timelines as well as the individual needs of staff members.

Teachers highly rate the “collegiality” among the staff. They frequently seek each other out for support with a particular student and/or class. Informally they visit their colleagues’ classrooms and find this to be very helpful. They have not had the opportunity to see similar schools but this is planned for next year.

The school is programmed in such a way that the grade six teachers teach all subjects and in the upper grades students have one teacher for English language arts and social studies and another for science and math. Teachers are licensed in only one of the subjects and thus there is a lack of specialist science and social studies teachers. In order to raise the quality of instruction in these areas, it is planned that all grades will be departmentalized and subjects taught by teachers whose licensing and expertise is in that area.

This year the principal initiated collaboration between the school and the neighboring elementary school. It is a program that provides students with an opportunity to work with the younger students. Older students take classes to experience how to interact with a younger age group and to gain leadership qualities. Students and parents speak positively about the program and how it adds to the quality of their education.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school sets goals that focus on issues identified on the New York State accountability report such as raising English language arts scores but these are too broad and are not a good guide to student performance and progress. The effectiveness of such goals are not measured and are without specific mastery criteria, thus the school is not able to accurately know if they are meeting them. It is better in math where the structures that have been successful are modified to match the changing needs of students.

The current whole school plan, to raise student achievement, does not have specific targets with interim goals and time frames. Because of the lack of these short-term goals, adjustments to make timely improvements to speed students’ progress are not so easily accomplished. There has been little opportunity to hold discussion about performance and progress based on data and student work since teachers do not have common meeting times in their programs. There is an inconsistency as to who is held accountable for developing agendas, keeping minutes and reporting results to the administration.

The principal is dedicated to expanding the arts program so that it is infused across curricular areas and for the school to truly reflect its theme. The goal at the beginning of the year was to raise the level of instruction, as well as providing opportunities for students to experience the performing arts by introducing them to world-class professionals and to extend partnerships for the students and teachers to have direct participation in such learning opportunities.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The School of Performing Arts	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 rigorous, 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 and tardiness?				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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?			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