



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

School of Leadership Development

Middle School 313

1600 Webster Avenue

Bronx

NY 10457

Principal: Lauren Wilkins

Dates of review: May 12 – 13, 2008

Lead Reviewer: George Wallace

Content of the report

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 School of Leadership Development is a middle school with 432 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 22% Black and 78% Hispanic students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 18.5% 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 89%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 89% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the school, and provides strong leadership which has brought about significant improvements through the school for staff and students
- The school runs very smoothly providing students with a highly positive atmosphere for learning within a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment.
- The school is successful at collecting a wide range of useful and relevant data that helps teachers become more effective in their lesson planning and teaching.
- Data is used well to track student performance throughout the school by various categories such as gender, ethnicity, age and socio-economic background.
- Support for students whose first language is not English is strong, especially through the bi-lingual classes.
- The school is very good at providing guidance, support and help for those students identified as in greatest need of improvement or at greatest risk.
- The principal has established a highly effective program of lesson observations with thorough feedback to support all round improvement.
- Professional development is very well managed and targeted to support the school in achieving its action plan goals.
- The school has a strong and effective program of setting and monitoring staff, student and school goals that are revised at interim points in the school year.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to raise staff understanding of the value of data use to interpret patterns and trends in the continuous quest of raising student achievement.
- Enable opportunities for teachers who teach the same groups of students to work collaboratively to discuss specific students' learning and achievement across subjects.
- Extend and enhance the search for procedures and actions that will improve student attendance.
- Increase the level of parent involvement to help complete the picture of all round support for effective student learning.

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.

The school is a learning community with a culture of continuous improvement. The principal, who joined the school just over two years ago, has made a significant impact on the way the school functions. The school's name epitomizes its overall vision for success. Students clearly understand this, recognizing their potential as future leaders. The values and directions outlined in the school's mission are beginning to take shape. The school improvement plan reveals a set of goals and strategies to achieve this ambition that are totally relevant to the needs of the school. Goal setting at whole school level and with students and teachers, although new, is an integral part of the school's thinking. Although teachers meet to discuss aspects of their work, there is no formal common planning time at grade level that allows teachers to share information about the same students in different learning settings. Data collection is a strong feature of the school and senior leaders are helping to lead staff professional development on item and pattern/trend analysis.

The school runs very smoothly and provides students with a safe, often stimulating learning environment. Students find it easy to seek help from teachers and other adults if required as staff know them well. Although parents are supportive of the school, they rarely take part in events, so the school is looking for further ways to encourage participation in the learning partnership. The principal knows the students by name, and has a high profile around the school because of frequent walkthroughs and informal visits to classrooms. The school budget has been used wisely to extend special education provision and scheduling has ensured better and successful provision for bi-lingual learners. The inquiry team changed its focus from English language arts to math during the year. Consequently, while the group works effectively together, they are still some time from making their research findings known. The school has made good progress in five of the six areas for development as identified in the last Quality Review. Most were to do with data analysis and the setting of goals within a strategic school improvement plan. It is in the area of improving attendance that the school still has much to do.

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 collects and uses students' performance data well. Senior leaders know and understand the performance and progress of students and work closely with teachers to promote consistency in school data use. Increasingly, staff are becoming fluent in the

interpretation and subsequent use of data. Many use end of course results and periodic test outcomes to plan differentiated instruction that meets individual student needs. For some classes, the math and English language arts performance data is graphed for each class and displayed across the school. Teachers of self-contained special education classes analyze performance data effectively and clearly understand rates of progress for this student group. Consequently differences in teachers' inputs occurs based on need. The school is closing the achievement gap for the lowest performers in English language arts. It pays particularly good attention to the performance of English language learners. Regular interim assessments enable teachers to organize classes very effectively to meet essential needs. This means many students confidently move to mono-lingual classes.

The administration carefully examines data for categories of particular interest to the school. These include ethnicity, gender and socio-economic groups. In addition, because a large population of students is held over from year to year, leaders also analyze data for this sub group. More generally, staff are still working on item analysis at classroom level, so trends and patterns do not routinely feature in their work. The principal examines performance data from previous years at class, subject and grade level, mainly for class trends of performance by students as they move through the school. Comparisons are made with the performance data of other middle schools. In addition and importantly for school improvement, several principals work together to share best practice, which frequently incorporates walkthroughs of other schools. Good, well-focused training in data interpretation is guiding all teachers toward using data effectively.

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.

Staff and students are fully engaged in goal setting. Students discuss learning goals with their teachers. They know these goals and are pleased to frequently discuss them and evaluate their level of success in reaching targets. The principal has clear, relevant, time-related goals that relate directly to school improvement priorities. The school is increasingly using its data to evaluate the performance of its students. Consequently, the school focuses on specific groups of students, such as those who are much older than the expected age for a grade and others at most at risk. Although this forms a large group, the school involves a broad range of internal and external support services to aid students' safety, personal and academic development.

Staff have good knowledge of whole school goals. Priority goals guide teachers in setting targets to improve individual and overall school improvement. Consequently, expectations of students' learning are high. Both parents and students recognize that teachers focus very well on raising achievement. Many parents support their school. However, a goal for the school is to raise significantly the involvement of parents in their children's education. As yet, the school does not exploit opportunities to encourage parents' frequent attendance at school events, or regular communication with staff. The school provides parents with plenty of information. Parents value the open door policy and the ease with which they can contact teachers. Where it is available, information gathered from parents specifically to aid their child's learning needs is communicated to teachers.

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 curriculum provides the administration with useful interim data so that performance is tracked. The school provides all of the mandatory courses. There is a small arts program and growing short programs, such as in leadership development, to supplement the basic curriculum. However, the present focus is about ensuring that the current subjects are interesting and effective to raise achievement and promote students’ personal and social development. Good quality advisory lessons form the backbone of the curriculum for personal and social development. Teachers care for their students, providing them with a safe and secure environment in which they can thrive. Teachers recognize that they are accountable for student learning. The administration carefully monitors lessons with feedback leading to improvements in pedagogy. The quality of teaching and learning is improving through good feedback and useful professional development. Many teachers have adopted teaching styles that encourage students to collaborate. Several classrooms evidence differentiated approaches to teaching, and in one bilingual class such work was highly effective. New scheduling ensures that teachers receive some common planning time that brings together math and science teachers and, separately, English language arts teachers with those for social studies.

A review of systems throughout the school has successfully reduced student movement between teaching periods to support good conduct. Although the school serves students with a variety of social difficulties, students are well behaved and focused on their learning. Teachers care, so provide feedback that promotes self-esteem while giving pointers for improvement in assessing students’ work. The school works hard to secure high attendance, however, student attendance remains low. Over the last year, the principal has introduced a program to ensure that all teachers telephone 15 parents per week to provide them with celebratory comments about their children as well as talk about issues of concern. This is helping raise attendance and so promoting effective learning.

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.

Members of the administration make frequent visits to classrooms. Lesson observations strongly focus on student learning and teachers value the good quality written and oral feedback they receive. They recognize it as one form of professional development in enhancing good teaching practice and tracking student progress. It is clear that the principal knows the strengths and areas for improvement of her staff. Senior leaders randomly call upon teachers to submit samples of student portfolios, as well as their data files. This rigorous monitoring is expanding consistency of practice because it is improving the school’s teaching and learning culture. Such close monitoring ensures that the senior leaders know the needs of the staff and so provide appropriate professional development. Staff value the wide range of professional development on offer. The school deliberately adopts various forms of internal training as well as supporting teachers’ attendance at external venues. Professional development closely aligns with the school development priorities, so correctly focuses on classroom management, the learning environment, data use and all teachers’ experience of working with English language

learners. Professional development has been successful, but there are still some inconsistencies in practice, such as in differentiated instruction. Although teachers have opportunities to watch others teach lessons, this is not common except for new teachers. However, teachers frequently join members of the administration on walkthroughs, which is an effective way for practice to be analyzed and discussed.

New teachers benefit from a good mentoring program. The formal and informal structures strongly support their learning. Guidance is strong, providing good support for students' personal and academic needs. The school successfully recognizes the importance of celebrating students' efforts and work. Therefore, a literacy fair has become an annual feature of collaborative working between local schools. The school also has several successful partnerships with outside agencies. Most operate to support students' personal, social and health, rather than academic, development and are relatively new.

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 school improvement plan is based on the principal's key goals. These wisely reflect the priorities identified at the last Quality Review together with core features identified by the principal. The school plan is evaluated suitably at the end of the school year. In addition, interim evaluations ensure that the school can modify goals and re-establish approaches to developments as it achieves aspects of goals. Raising the quality of the learning environment across the school exemplifies this. In addition to school goals, teachers set three core goals for themselves. They discuss these with the principal so goals are relevant, achievable, time-related and meet both school and personal needs. Mid-year evaluations inform refinements to them. Goals include issues connected with challenging higher achieving students and grouping of students for effective learning.

Teachers use several periodic and diagnostic tests to monitor student progress. Their observations of students' learning together with discussions help ensure that next steps promote effective learning. Revisions, where necessary, occur as a result of evaluation. Teachers set clear class goals that relate to students' academic and personal development. Monitoring by teachers and senior leaders allows interim evaluations to identify achievements and inform modification of goals where necessary. Close monitoring of students' work through agreed use of procedures is in place. School leaders track students' achievements effectively and ask questions about their progress. The recently introduced measures to monitor student achievement are successful. In addition, the way in which teachers record data, identify short term goals for students and keep pace with their needs is valuable and growing stronger. Senior leaders clearly know the needs of their school. They are working tirelessly to ensure that the school improves for the benefit of its students. The principal's clear vision for the school translates into a series of essential improvement steps. The current approach is working, as reflected in the huge over-subscription for places at the school for the next academic year.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: School of Leadership Development	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