



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

**The Marie Curie School for Medicine, Nursing and Allied
Health Professions**

**High School 237
120 West 231st Street
Bronx
NY 10463**

Principal: Rodney Fisher

Dates of review: December 10 - 11, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Marie Curie School for Medicine, Nursing and Allied Health Professions is a high school with 410 students from grade 8 through grade 12. The school population comprises 29% Black, 66% Hispanic, 2% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 19% of the students enrolled and girls account for 81%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 91.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 84.1% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Visitors to this small school immediately notice the focus on health professions through the dress code, bulletin boards displaying students' work and the respectful interpersonal relationships. The principal inspires staff and students alike to match his own high expectations. This results in a cohesive community that puts students at the center of all its work, so that they grow in maturity and independence as learners.

The school continues successfully to refine its organization, systems and instructional practice to secure greater consistency. Faculty and leaders interrogate a range of data regularly to adjust instruction and initiate interventions so that students in all groups make progress academically and personally. Staff support students' individual needs carefully and involve parents through frequent communication, with the continual aim of improving outcomes. Students feel secure and valued as individuals in the harmonious and collaborative learning environment.

The reflective faculty selflessly shares good practice, to hone professional skills, in tandem with useful formal professional development. As such, teachers increasingly differentiate instruction, but lessons do not always offer sufficient challenge to extend learning through strategies such as effective questioning. Teachers share assessment information transparently with students, who evaluate themselves in order to set goals in many content areas. However, students' goals are not sufficiently precise to enable them to monitor their progress effectively. Not all written feedback from teachers informs students why they have been successful or suggests clear next steps in order to assist this process. Students have rubrics to guide their work, but some rubrics lack the required specificity to extend students' learning. Teachers' own goals are not uniformly exact with defined measurable outcomes.

Students benefit from a relevant curriculum, delivered by passionate teachers, that references medical issues in many content areas, richly enhanced by internships and interesting extra-curricular opportunities. Students have many ways of experiencing success and enjoy seeing their efforts commended on bulletin boards. Leaders and faculty share a strong desire to improve continually to benefit students. However, they do not explicitly share subject and grade goals with the community to increase ownership and accountability. Although the school has demonstrated the capacity to improve, school-wide goals are not sufficiently defined to enable accurate evaluation of progress toward their fulfillment.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The supportive environment engenders a sense of security, so all relationships are respectful and individual students are known and valued, with their work celebrated in vibrant displays around the school.
- Students, including special education students and English language learners, make progress because of careful programming, targeted support, and high expectations for their future.
- The inspirational principal gives purposeful direction to the cohesive staff who work together to improve student outcomes through reflective practice, distributed leadership and implementation of whole school initiatives.
- The school analyzes relevant formative and summative information routinely to identify trends in student progress and performance in order to inform the curriculum and instruction.
- Students benefit from varied activities including internships and extra-curricular opportunities that enrich their learning and offer different ways of experiencing success.
- The student-centered learning community involves parents and external organizations in working skillfully with students to foster their independence, to encourage ownership of their own learning and to develop skills for life, so they grow academically, socially and emotionally.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend and refine goal setting across all content areas so that interim checkpoints are used to measure progress toward goals against quantifiable indicators, and increase the school community's ownership and accountability for meeting goals through explicit sharing of goals and learning standards.
- Ensure that all teachers' professional goals address their individual growth with associated action plans that include clear measurability, aligned with agreed professional standards.
- Deepen differentiation of instruction so that all lessons engage students and offer suitable challenge at their level, including effective questioning that elicits higher-order thinking and extends learning.
- Support students in setting precise goals by consistently giving clear written feedback on why they have been successful with next steps for improvement, based on detailed rubrics.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Faculty is increasingly adept at analyzing data to understand students' performance and progress. Teachers use tools such as Acuity and Scantron, along with other summative and formative data, to build a picture of individual and group achievement and progress across many subject areas. The data specialist's spreadsheet presents information in accessible formats, color-coded to filter required groups, so that leaders aggregate and disaggregate data to identify trends and anomalies. The spreadsheet does not yet contain information on all core subjects, but the school has been effective in broadening its database. Teachers receive the results from this regular analysis through faculty and department meetings, and are thus able to plan effectively. Discussions center on groupings such as English language learners, special education students, holdovers, ethnic groups and the lowest achieving third of students. Leaders and teachers are mindful of their transient student population, the gender imbalance and social factors that impact on performance. To pursue a medically oriented education, many students spend considerable time traveling to and from school, so the principal and attendance teacher scrutinize tardiness and absence reports daily. As a result of these robust procedures, average high school attendance is 92%.

Teachers maintain open communication with parents, notifying them of student successes and deficiencies, so they are involved in an effective learning partnership. Parents have ready access to the principal, assistant principals and teachers, with formal reporting four times a year augmented by frequent e-mail and phone calls or letters. Parent workshops enhance understanding of data. Staff sensitively explain to parents of special education students what the school offers in the collaborative team-teaching model, supplemented by academic intervention services. In this way, families make informed decisions about the available programs. Teachers share assessment information with students and encourage them to be reflective learners so that, for example, they know their reading level and have ownership of their learning in setting goals.

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 at subject, grade and school-wide level results from collaborative analysis and projections of performance rooted in data. Frequent meetings within the horizontal and vertical organizational structure ensure that staff maintain focus on instruction and student performance and progress. The associated action plans rightly detail regular

interim checkpoints and tools for measuring students' progress, do not include interim goals to monitor progress securely at each stage.

These goals inform the Comprehensive Educational Plan, devised by staff, with some input from students and parent members of the school leadership team. However, the school has not established shared understanding of these goals, in order to hold the community accountable. The principal's performance review, which aligns with subject and grade goals, comprises an overarching focus to improve instruction and students' outcomes through "assessment for learning." The teachers' workroom displays associated articles and prompts to highlight this initiative.

Teachers assist students to set and review their own goals in most subjects at regular intervals, based on their work and rubrics. This process is inconsistent, as rubrics do not give sufficient detail to enable students to improve their work and extend achievement. The value of teachers' written feedback varies in information about success and next steps. Consequently, students' goals lack specificity. Teachers communicate frequently with parents and students, informally and formally, about successes and areas of concern so they are involved in a transparent exchange of information. Students confer with teachers, which supports self and peer assessment in many content areas, so ensuring they take responsibility for their own learning.

Careful programming, reflecting sensitive attention to individual circumstances and challenges, means that all groups of students make progress. Special education students transit smoothly as programs and interventions facilitate their self-advocacy. The medically oriented dress code exemplifies the school's focus on future health-related careers and instills a sense of pride, identity and common direction. High expectations derive from all adults who model respectful interpersonal relationships and purposeful activity as they move about the school. Students want to see their pictures posted on the "Wall of Fame" for attendance, as this motivates them along with other incentives and recognitions of their effort and achievements.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Although a small school, leaders manage the budget carefully so that students experience a standards-based curriculum, including the arts, that references medical issues when possible. Administrators and faculty seek to incorporate issues relevant to the Bronx community and make real-life connections to engage students. In addition, because of the staff's dedication and the administration's ability to harness strengths, students have varied ways of experiencing success through after-school activities such as cheerleading, yoga, capoeira (Brazilian martial arts/dance fusion) and green club. In this way, students deepen relationships with teachers, who lead these additional courses, and enrich their learning. Regents' preparation classes, college skills courses and targeted groups such as the "Marie Curie Brotherhood" reach the needs of particular groups of students, with positive effects on achievement and self-esteem. As a result of this flexible curriculum, that includes internship opportunities, last year's graduation rate at 88% was above the City average, and early indications for this year show a similar pattern.

Faculty work hard to engage students with increasing use of active learning and by finding ways to extend critical thinking. However, this practice is inconsistent across classes, with many teachers missing opportunities to plan for accountable talk or to use effective questioning techniques. Although cooperative learning is routine and students are compliant, lessons do not consistently challenge students' thinking or extend learning by incorporating varied processes, product or content, based on data. Organizational decisions to emphasize English language arts and math for grade 9, to provide higher-level classes in some subjects, and to offer targeted achievement programs for other groups of students show promise in meeting identified needs. Some of these decisions reference the quality data analysis and findings of the inquiry team.

Visitors note the affirming relationships and evident trust between all constituents of the school community. The principal sets the tone, is highly visible and accessible in hallways at passing times, and constantly leads by example. As a result, teachers are committed to improving students' outcomes, with many wishing to give back to their neighborhood community where they grew up. A teacher summarized the cohesive dedication that underpins all work, saying staff constantly ask, "How does this benefit the students?" Students are secure and comfortable in this supportive environment, so parents reflect positively on the choice of this school, saying, "They try to do things better for life here. Everyone communicates. Everything is correct." Students benefit from their reflective teachers' support, which encourages them in turn to be reflective learners, so they grow academically, socially and emotionally. The student government represents the students' voice and consults frequently with the principal.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Leaders and teachers work together harmoniously to develop their professional skills using the California Teaching Standards as their model, so they have a common language. The lesson observation format does not align exactly with the agreed California model. However, consequent feedback and related dialogue revolves around teachers' self-assessment and setting professional goals within the agreed framework. Monitoring is not rigorous enough, as teachers' professional plans do not consistently refer to clear measurable indicators of progress toward goals that relate directly to improving their skills.

Building staff capacity at all levels, the principal and assistant principals have a thorough understanding of teachers' strengths and areas for development through frequent visits to classrooms, both informal and formal. New teachers quickly integrate and grow as professionals through peer support and the effective mentoring program. Staff collaborate with commendably honest reflection and non-competitive sharing of ideas and practices to benefit students. As one teacher said, "I love the collegiality and camaraderie," while a coach observed, "I've received so much as a professional." The small school environment limits opportunities for frequent inter-visitations, but lab sites and informal professional development richly supplement formal professional development activities. Frequent meetings, formal and informal, center on student work and improving practice through distributed leadership opportunities. Teachers increasingly implement recent initiatives such "assessment for learning" techniques, with a common focus on strands such as differentiated instruction. Initiatives derive from the successful action research of last year's Inquiry Team, which informs the wider approach to target literacy skills across the curriculum this year.

In this student-centered community, which values individuals and supports personal growth, careful guidance and social work programs usefully support students and families. Students benefit from peer mediation and conflict resolution programs, so that the environment is calm, cooperative and purposeful. Plans include referral to external support agencies as agreed by involving students and parents at every stage, such as the Moshulu Montefiore Community Center and Riverdale Health Clinic. The school sustains its mission to prepare students with skills necessary for health-related service providers through the successful and motivating internship program.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 inspires staff and students with his high expectations, his accessibility and continual desire to "raise the bar" in order to improve student outcomes. He does not ask anyone to do anything he would not do himself, fostering a community that is inclusive and cohesive with his purposeful leadership. Committed to using data skillfully to understand performance and progress, teachers and leaders regularly assess student achievement. However, content areas differ in the rigor of their interim monitoring. They formally review progress four times a year, and share information with parents.

Ongoing evaluation of the impact of instruction, programs and organizational occurs at frequent intervals. In this way, through examination of relevant formative and summative information staff adjust or modify programs. Scrutiny of other information such as the Progress Report and findings from the inquiry team resulted in the intensive focus across subjects and grades on inference and contextualizing vocabulary. Although students have improved their skills in these areas, this work continues in order to bring about sustained impact.

The school responds to the students who transfer in during the year by examining transcripts and developing personalized schedules to secure graduation and minimize holdovers. Its analysis of trends of student progress and intake since opening as a middle-high school informed the decision to concentrate on moving into a high school grade configuration, phasing out the middle school by the end of this year, in line with its mission to prepare students for college and health services oriented careers.

The school has a realistic picture of its developmental stage based on accurate evaluation. It has grown into this cohesive and dedicated community that focuses on students' growth, based on sound knowledge of the individual and of trends across groups and years. As one student said, "Teachers are always there to help with personal and other things." Though continually building capacity and careful staff selection, the whole school team has the dedication and willingness to hone professional skills to improve student outcomes further.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Marie Curie School for Medicine, Nursing and Allied Health Professions	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>				
	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>				
	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	

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

<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed