



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Division of Performance and Accountability
2010-2011**

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Computer School

Middle School 245

**100 West 77th Street
New York
NY 10024**

Principal: Henry Zymeck

Dates of review: April 13 - 14, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Sara Carvajal

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Computer School is a middle school with 393 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 24% Black, 25% Hispanic, 40% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 96.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well-developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The curriculum offers a wide range of demanding experiences and choice that facilitate interdisciplinary learning and real-world connections for students.
 - In alignment with the evolving State standards, teacher teams excel in developing an integrated curriculum that embeds rigorous research and assorted writing genres, including expository papers and monologues, across all subject areas. Students across grades are positioned to engage in “deep thinking of real social issues” as they explore the struggles woven into classics, such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In science, essential questions drive on-going opportunities for rich debate between students as they excitedly evaluate the influence of water on heat and convection and work on generating projects that depict their conclusions. As a result, all students are well prepared to succeed on the Regents’ in math and earth science, and the vast majority of students demonstrate great success on the State English language arts exam.
- The principal makes highly strategic and effective organizational decisions across all facets of the school, which support optimal learning conditions for all students.
 - The configuration into two smaller houses sustains the highly successful small-school vision established by the school’s original founder over two decades ago. Each house is adeptly led by a teacher coordinator who consistently collaborates with the principal to assist in hiring personnel, matching students to teachers, evaluating and addressing the professional development needs of the staff, and propelling distributive leadership opportunities for other teachers. Programming for students is as intense as working with a Rubik’s cube as the principal seeks to authentically tailor instruction at the macro level. Across the two houses, students are carefully assigned to math classes, according to their achievement levels, so that they receive either well-aligned enrichment or intervention supports within the regular school day. As a result of these decisions, the vast majority of students across the site experience reduced class-size and consistent academic success across subject areas.
- Teachers work successfully in collaborative teams that share good practice, develop tools to successfully analyze data, and plan for rigorous curriculum and instruction.
 - As part of their weekly meetings, teams of teachers design assessments for specific subject areas. The English language arts team has invested great time and energy in developing students’ stamina and rigor in writing across the grades via collaboratively designed, five-paragraph essay assignments. Additionally, the team has analyzed the outcomes of these pieces at four intervals throughout the year, complementing the work with a school-wide survey to gauge students’ perspective on periodic assessment. As a result of a comparative analysis between these data streams, teachers then generated a peer observation rubric, which now guides them, guides them in their accountability in ongoing improvement to classroom practice, and ultimately, the increased quality of student writing.
- The school has established efficient systems for monitoring teaching with a clear focus on improving reflective practice.

- Most teachers support the view that students must struggle with a concept or skill, through experiential learning, in order to authentically internalize a rich understanding. Therefore, school leaders provide a plethora of professional learning opportunities that aims to nurture the instructional practice of all teachers at the site, a great many of whom are well rooted in their craft. The majority of teachers benefit most from periodic peer reviews and weekly opportunities to collaboratively dig into and dissect student work. Because of the strong alignment between the school's collective instructional focus and the self-reflective and intrinsically critical nature of its highly skilled teachers, students thrive academically.
- Relationships across the school are warm, supportive and inclusive of all students, teachers and parents, all of whom feel valued and thereby take pride in being part of the richly diverse school community.
 - The highly approachable principal and multi-talented staff strongly believe that students should love attending school. Therefore, all hands are on deck to ensure that students benefit optimally from the ongoing social and emotional supports available through the monthly student government meetings, formal advisory period, confidential consultations, as well as the casual personal interactions between staff and students throughout the regular school day. As a result, students, including English language learners and students with individualized learning plans, are genuinely excited about learning and want to excel, with several happily exclaiming, "It's cool to be in school."
- Students and their families greatly benefit from numerous opportunities to be involved in monitoring and celebrating academic progress through regular and open communication with assorted school staff.
 - The school utilizes a variety of communication streams, including weekly newsletters and periodic interim progress reports, in order to engage students and their families in conversations regarding academic achievement, social progress, and the school's available resources to support each. However, all agree that the most integral lever in bridging the home-school connection is the web-based data site, which is accessible by parents and students alike. Besides providing current grades for projects and exams and updates on missing assignments, the repository offers families an email hub with direct access to teachers at all hours. As a result, students and their families are continually engaged in understanding real-time achievement data and pushed to meet the school's high expectations.
- The principal has established very effective systems for school-self-evaluation and review that enables the school to maximize its available resources in support of improving student performance.
 - Every Friday, teachers meet in subject-specific teams to reflect on the taught curriculum vis-à-vis the demands of the evolving State standards. During this sacred time, the staff discusses the resources, processes, and assessments within their plans, which worked best as well as areas that were less fruitful for students. Consequently, the curriculum is refined steadily throughout the year so that the current needs of all students are immediately addressed, and in addition, best practices and successful resources are captured and frontloaded for future use.

What the school needs to improve

- Streamline the current systems for collecting and monitoring data relative to the progress of student achievement, ensuring the information is used effectively by both teacher teams and individual teachers during instructional decision-making.
 - The principal and teacher leaders are currently exploring ways by which to merge the school's web-based anecdotal and spreadsheet data repositories into one central resource that supports increased efficacy for instructional planning by individual teachers and teacher teams. In addition, the school is developing structures that embed team reflection on the effectiveness of data tools in their planning for continued school improvement. As a result, at this time all teachers across the site do not yet systematically review and refine the content of the assorted data streams, nor do they have consistent protocols by which said data is relayed to students and their families.
- Extend the good practice of differentiated instruction so that learning activities across all subject areas and classes consistently provide rigor and challenge for all students.
 - The vast majority of classrooms provide students an authentic push that consistently develops higher order thinking skills through a variety of independent tasks that are well matched to student's achievement levels. For example, students are often positioned to constructively criticize each other's reasoning during problem solving in math. During science, most students work in well-planned partnerships to explore sustainable forms of energy through a balance of independent hands-on experiments and web-based research. However, at this time, there remains a very small minority of teachers who lecture about content without offering students ample opportunity for independent exploration with a given topic. As a result, students in those classes do not demonstrate full engagement in class or a solid understanding of the subject matter.
- Refine action planning by explicitly communicating modifications to school-wide and departmental goals so that all teachers are fully informed of adjustments, to ensure alignment of their practices to the revised expectations.
 - Year after year, the school principal is well-supported by several teacher leaders in analyzing City accountability data, report card lists and classroom snapshots to generate, evaluate, and modify school-wide goals and initiatives, as needed. Similarly, teachers are enabled to gauge student progress with individualized goals systematically during periodic house meetings. However, at this time, a small group of faculty members is not yet fully engaged in consistently triangulating school-wide and individual student goals, student achievement on interim assessments, and classroom instructional practice. As a result, the well-rooted, data-driven goal-setting structure does not serve to leverage classroom instruction in these few instances.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Computer School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?				X			
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X			
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X					
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed