

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Margaret Douglas

**Elementary school M036
123 Morningside Avenue
New York
NY 10027**

Principal: Crystal Mullins-Simmons

Dates of review: January 10 - 11, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Margaret Douglas is an elementary school with 633 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 53% Black, 44% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school sustains an outstanding range of school partnerships with community organizations that have a positive impact on students' social, emotional and academic development. (4.4)
 - Regular assemblies and daily morning announcements celebrate students' academic and social achievements. The school's guidance counselor frequently provides well delivered professional development to staff during faculty meetings and provides workshops so that teachers are able to service challenging students. As such, teachers are well prepared to utilize strategies that meet the social-emotional needs of these students, resulting in the reduction of guidance referrals and the reduction of the referral rate to citywide children's services.
 - School leaders frequently review attendance, guidance and referral reports to note trends and areas of need. They ensure that added supports from Harlem Hospital integrate well with school-based guidance services throughout the school day to meet the needs of targeted students and their families. The school's outstanding collaborations with Music Outreach, the 92nd Street Y, Music on the Brain and the Manhattan School of Music provide all students with enriched arts experiences. School leaders recognize that the arts are areas where lower performing students excel. Consequently, the arts serve as an entrée to creating increased levels of student excitement and involvement, thereby bolstering students' self-esteem.
- Parents are kept well informed of school needs and student performance data, resulting in an open exchange, increased parental support and a shared commitment to the school's goals. (2.4)
 - Parents volunteer to support school personnel during lunch, morning line up, recess and at dismissal. This increase in the adult to student ratio is conducive to optimal levels of student safety and success. POPS on Patrol is a gender-based cadre of male volunteers who help to ensure a smooth and safe transition to school by guarding the school's perimeter and escorting students to school. Additionally, a broad-based level of support results in the active involvement of parents on the school leadership team. Parents provided input in the redesign of the school lobby with a brightly painted mural and are presently pursuing grant opportunities for the installation of a new gym and auditorium. Parents state that there is always "an open door forum to share ideas." As such, they feel valued as partners in the process, resulting in a high level of involvement and a shared commitment to the school community.
 - Families appreciate the frequent hands-on workshops on the utilization of ARIS Parent Link. A bulletin board outside the entrance of the school encourages parents and guardians to continually utilize this tool in order to better understand students' performance data. Additionally, translation and child care services are provided during the workshops so that parents are better able to focus on the information being shared. The increase in

the number of parents utilizing this electronic system as noted on ARIS Parent Link results in deeper levels of understanding, leading to closer monitoring of student success.

- School leaders and staff use data-informed processes for planning and goal setting across grades and subjects to improve student outcomes. (3.1)
 - The principal's performance objectives and school goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan, focused on increasing student proficiency levels in English language arts and math, align with clear, school-level action plans. These goals and objectives leverage growth in students' academic and social-emotional outcomes as noted on predictive and Early childhood literacy assessment system results.
 - The principal and assistant principal plan for the school year by reviewing outcomes from state assessment data as well as the results of the School Survey and Progress Report. This is complemented by a needs assessment and regular review of Acuity data. As such, the school community has developed a 'watch list' of its most struggling students in English language arts and math, resulting in targeted assistance to specific groups of students.
- Assessment practices help identify student performance and progress so that instruction can be adjusted in order to improve student outcomes. (2.2)
 - In addition to using common rubrics, grade level teams also create common assessments which are used to provide consistent data for analysis, as well as promote ongoing conversation and reflection across the grade. Reflection and revision lead to the development of specific areas in the curricula which align with state indicators. Consequently, teachers identify gaps and teach particular aspects of the curriculum to solidify learning.
 - Teacher teams organize and review assorted streams of data including Acuity, Fountas and Pinnell levels, early childhood literacy assessment system, predictive assessments, student work products and end of unit formative assessment data. Teachers assemble data binders and generate a focused list of students after review of data results. Consequently, there is targeted support, such as the morning math club, to provide enrichment to higher performing students as well as academic intervention services to English language learners and students with disabilities. These varied support structures result in the achievement gains of these students as noted on teachers' formative assessment tracking logs.
- School leaders and staff work cohesively to evaluate data and refine assessment practices in order to meet student needs and accelerate progress. (5.2)
 - Teachers develop and adjust benchmark assessments approximately every four to six weeks, and review skills, content language and exemplars from the English language arts and math state standards. Additionally, weekly meetings with the cabinet enable school leaders and faculty to regularly evaluate periodic assessment, attendance and

suspension data resulting in needed adjustments, leading to maximized opportunities for students to achieve academic success and attain specific academic and behavioral goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teaching practices so that lesson planning reflects differentiation for targeted students and academic tasks consistently challenge and extend student learning. (1.2)
 - Some teachers utilize differentiated strategies to accommodate students' learning styles. They also tailor instruction using specific technology resources and student groupings in order to meet the needs of English language learners and student with disabilities. However, as noted in instruction and displayed student work, differentiated tasks and extension activities to consistently challenge varied ability groups, including higher achieving students, is not yet standard practice. As such, students' ability to learn at high levels, apply learning to new situations, persist in the face of difficulty and further accelerate their own progress is not the norm across all classrooms.
 - While critical thinking strategies are noted in some classrooms, many teachers do not yet employ open-ended, high order questions that lead to increasingly high levels of student engagement. As such, classroom discussions where students challenge and support each other's thinking are not sufficiently evident across grades and content areas.
- Refine the curriculum emphasizing rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills for a variety of learners with different needs. (1.1)
 - Core staff members deliberately adjusted the curriculum in order to integrate standards into English language arts and math units of study. However, students are not engaged in the types of projects and tasks that apply knowledge and so their retention of content information is not solidified. Moreover, performance based tasks that probe for deep understanding and application of learning do not coherently extend across all content areas or grade levels so that all students are suitably challenged, are able to make personal connections to themselves and the world and are able to transfer their learning to new contexts.
- Deepen and expand teachers' understanding of collaborative inquiry in order to influence teacher practice and student outcomes. (4.2)
 - While teams are teacher led, teachers are not receiving sufficient support to develop their own skills as facilitators of adult learning. As a result, teams do not reflect together on their facilitation techniques in order to deepen their leadership skills and refine tested theories to further accelerate students' growth and achievement.
 - Grade level teams meet weekly to discuss specific skills and strategies. However the development of an inquiry approach is not well defined

across all teams. As a result, team members do not consistently note trends and sufficiently reflect on instructional strategies in order to further develop and evaluate the effectiveness of their classroom level instructional decisions on their practices and student outcomes.

- Design a uniform protocol for classroom observations to provide a common lens that evaluates teaching practices and identifies next steps. (4.1)
 - School leaders utilize walkthroughs, formal and informal observations to support end of year decisions. The follow up on next steps however, is infrequent, informal and does not incorporate defined timeframes. Additionally, they have not aligned this feedback with student work in order to more closely provide actionable feedback. Both limitations mean that there are missed opportunities to accelerate teacher growth and student outcomes.
 - Although teacher observations note strengths and areas for improvement, school leaders have not yet fully and thoughtfully aligned their feedback to a research based tool. As a result, expectations for teacher practice are not clearly defined so that school leaders can adequately accelerate professional growth in order to impact greater student outcomes.
- Refine instructional and human resources so that they more closely align with students' needs and support the development of higher order thinking skills. (1.3)
 - The principal's budgeting, coupled with staff input, result in the strategic use of resources aligned to the school's goals. Computers are available in most classrooms. However, all teachers do not yet integrate this valuable resource into their long range plans to enable students to publish end-of-unit reports. Additionally, although teachers meet weekly in grade level planning teams, the integration of library resources are not fully embedded into the team structure across all grades and content areas. As such, research strategies aligned with project-based learning is not yet consistent across all classrooms, precluding students from producing higher level work.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Margaret Douglas	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?		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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?				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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		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