



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

School of Leadership Development

Community Intermediate School 313

**1600 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Lauren Wilkins

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Reviewer: Mary Summers

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

This middle school serves 433 students in grades 6 through 8 from the immediate locality and from other parts of the district. Most of the students come from either Black (27.6%) or Hispanic (70.4%) backgrounds and there are far more Hispanic students than found in similar schools. There are more girls than boys and this is unusual for City schools. About one third of students are English language learners and these include a significant number from families recently arrived in the country. The main home language spoken is Spanish.

Attendance is below average at 89.3% and has fallen steadily in the last three years. Almost 90% of students are Title 1 eligible, which is slightly higher than similar schools and much higher than the City average. The school has been through a period of great instability over the last three years. The principal has been in post for two years but, prior to that, there had been two changes in the administration within a year. Currently, the teaching staff is relatively inexperienced and includes five new teachers this year.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students feel safe and secure in school and are confident that they can turn to an adult for help if necessary.
- Staff know the students well and respond sensitively to their personal needs.
- The school has been successful in improving behavior and reducing suspensions.
- The administration has the respect of staff and students and has the potential to effect improvement.
- The school has made a good start in compiling data to track individual, class and grade progress.
- The school focuses well on students in greatest need of improvement.
- The administration monitors classroom teaching regularly and gives clear, written feedback about how teachers can improve instruction.
- The school has made a good start in supporting teachers' professional development although this has yet to impact upon students' achievement.
- Small group and individual interventions are beginning to improve students' skills, knowledge and understanding.

What the school needs to improve

- Set clear, measurable goals for school and student achievement, regularly checking progress and realigning practices and resources as necessary.
- Make teachers more accountable for their students' performance by establishing targets for achievement, allied to whole school goals.
- Involve students more effectively in their learning by setting goals and ensuring they receive clear information from teachers about what they must do to improve.
- Ensure all teachers use data successfully to plan lessons which meet the wide performance range of students in their classes.
- Increase teachers' use of computers to add interest to lessons and increase students' motivation.
- Work with parents and students to improve students' attendance at school and at the extended day program.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school.

Although this is an undeveloped school, many good systems have been implemented. However, these have yet to impact on the quality of education offered and students' achievement overall.

Students, teachers and parents say that the school has improved a great deal in the two years since the current administration has been in place. The school is now safe and secure and students are, for the most part reasonably well behaved. The rate of exclusions has fallen considerably, reflecting the impact of some of the innovations. Truancy has also reduced although remains a high priority for action.

Students are assessed regularly and this information is used for class groupings and to identify those in need of specific help. Useful programs have been introduced to help students tackle weaknesses in reading, writing and mathematics and these are beginning to have an impact. The administration and some key staff are beginning to use the data generated from assessments to track the performance of individual classes and to identify in which aspects of literacy and mathematics students require the most help. However, this practice is not yet firmly established among all teachers. Similarly, not all teachers are using the detailed information they receive about students' existing levels to help plan their lessons to meet the wide range of students' needs.

The school has begun to develop a vision for its future improvement but at present there are no long- and short-term goals in terms of improving students' achievement and the quality of instruction. Teachers are not yet held accountable for their students' performance and students themselves have little responsibility for their own learning. There is little in the curriculum to illustrate the school's designation as a leadership development school.

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 student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

All teachers have assessment binders, which contain a good range of information. At the beginning of each academic year, students take a test to assess their current levels in English language arts and mathematics. The administration, literacy and mathematics coaches analyze the baseline information to identify students' weaker areas. This is helping to inform instruction in some classes but this is not common practice throughout the school. Mid-year assessments are carried out in February to check how well students are progressing. This year, additional informal assessments are being carried out to let parents know about their children's progress at regular intervals during the year, encouraging them to take a more active interest in their children's achievement.

Every student has a personal education plan which contains assessments of their current levels in English language arts and mathematics, and the areas in which they need further support. Teachers are being encouraged to identify the strategies they are going to use to help remedy these weaknesses. Portfolios contain graded assignments in English language arts, mathematics, social studies and science with teachers' comments about the students' performance. Most of these are positive and recognise students' efforts, but few provide information about how they could be improved to reach the next level.

Fewer students than in most schools reach levels 3 and 4 in the State and City tests. The school is aware that more students should be reaching these levels and has implemented new programs to try to improve their achievement. These strategies to raise achievement include developing the use of data, but it is too soon to evaluate their impact on student achievement.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

Useful programs have been implemented to support students most in need of improvement. The priority is to support level 1 students but some low level 2 students are also included. The Wilson program, for example, is being used with students who are in the very early stages of learning to read and this is already showing signs of success. A new program for mathematics has been started this year but there is not yet enough data to assess its effectiveness.

The school is reasonably calm and orderly but there is not yet a strong enough focus on learning and achievement. Individual strengths and weaknesses are recognized but the school does not yet set clear goals for students to work towards, helping them to take more responsibility for their own learning. Some students' work is displayed on walls in common areas but not enough to encourage them to take a real pride in their achievements. The administration promotes the use of rubrics so that students know what they are working towards, but there are few in evidence throughout the school.

The school encourages parents to work with the school for their children's benefit. Parent conferences with teachers are usually well attended but workshops attract few participants. Those who take an interest know what the school stands for and how they can support their children. However, there are a great many parents that the school has still to reach.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

Students feel safe and secure in school. They report that this is a distinct improvement from the situation two years ago. They know that there is always someone who will help them if they have a problem. Staff know the students well and respond sensitively to their personal needs. The principal, for instance, greets students warmly, often with a few kind words of encouragement.

The quality of instruction varies considerably through the school. There are some pockets of good practice where teachers plan work in small groups to meet the different needs of students but this is the exception rather than the rule. A very narrow range of instructional methods are used in some classes and this results in students losing interest in their work and not making as much progress as they should. Tasks often provide limited stimulation. Only in a few lessons do students seem to really enjoy learning and these are always where they are involved in group work or practical activities.

The curriculum focuses very heavily on English language arts and mathematics. There are lessons in social studies and science and the school is currently equipping a laboratory to enable science to be taught in a more practical way. There are not yet any planned links between subjects to help students practice their literacy and mathematical skills in other subjects although a few teachers are trying to do this in an informal way. The school has a computer lab which is used mainly for intervention programs for the weakest students. The laptops are not being used routinely in lessons to make teaching and learning more interesting. There is a good range of activities offered outside the school day, including fencing, music, arts and crafts and organized sports although a relatively small number of students take part. The school's designation as a leadership development school is not yet apparent in its work with students.

Attendance is below average at 89.3% and continues to fall. Although truancy is much reduced it still remains a high priority for the school. The impact of the extended day programs is also affected by poor attendance and the fact that many arrive late, delaying the start of the sessions. Some of the activities provided in these sessions lack interest and challenge for the students.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The administration is respected and has the potential to effect improvement. Teachers are positive about the innovations in the school and hold the administration in high regard, recognizing the commitment towards students and the supportive atmosphere that has been created for staff and students alike. Regular observations of lessons help the administration identify where instructional practice can be improved. Feedback has been successful in improving individual teachers' skills, especially their management of students' behavior.

The administration has had little opportunity to consider students' needs when appointing new staff. There has been a high staff turnover in recent years and currently a significant number of teachers are inexperienced. Recently, a more stable staffing situation has enabled professional development to be organized in a more constructive way, ensuring teachers benefit not only from in-house support but also from training courses and meetings outside school. Teachers have attended assessment workshops where they have been shown how to use data to drive classroom instruction and training to introduce the use of rubrics in the classroom. New teachers are mentored and supported appropriately with regular meetings where they can seek advice about any areas of concern. A monthly 'Lunch and Learn' voluntary program for teachers has provided information about Balanced Literacy and Writers' Workshop.

Useful partnerships are currently being developed with outside bodies to support students and their families with, for example, health and social issues.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

The school has spent the last two years establishing systems and bringing order to classrooms. Now that this has been accomplished, the administration has begun to work together with staff to create a clear, shared vision for the school's future. This process is in the early stages and presently there are no clear, measurable goals for improvement in the quality of education offered or in the results that students will achieve.

Although some good intervention strategies have been introduced to improve the achievement of those students in greatest need, there are currently no formal systems in place to rigorously evaluate their effectiveness, and to see if plans and practices need to be adapted.

The administration has rightly identified the links between instruction and achievement and is working with teachers to improve their practice. However, teachers are not yet held accountable for their students' performance, and there are no clear links between individual, class, grade and whole school goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: School of Leadership Development (CIS 313)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score	X		

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.	X		
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.	X		
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2	X		

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.	X		
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.	X		
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.	X		
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.		X	
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3	X		
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.	X		
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.		X	
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.		X	
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.	X		
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.	X		
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.	X		
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5	X		