



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**John M Harrigan School**

**Elementary School 029**

**425 Henry Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11201**

**Principal: Melanie Raneri Woods**

**Dates of review: December 10 - 11, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Joy Stopher**

## 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

John M Harrigan School is an elementary school with 678 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 11% Black, 24.5% Hispanic, 55.5% White, and 9% Asian and other students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 95.2%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the school and is well supported by her assistant principals.
- Shared decision-making is commonplace and results in a cohesive community centred on learning.
- Staff, students and parents have high expectations for each other.
- The school provides a broad curriculum with a strong emphasis on the development of literacy and math.
- Parents are actively involved in their children's education.
- The school gives high priority to teachers' professional development to improve the quality of instruction.
- There is a wide and varied range of arts and enrichment programs, which engage and motivate students.
- The school is a reflective community focused on continuous improvement.
- Very good use is made of data to differentiate instruction.
- Relationships are excellent resulting in high standards of behaviour and a real enjoyment of learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Improve the systems for monitoring the performance and progress of special education students by sharing the best practices that exist.
- Expand the use of technology.

## 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 well developed.**

The John Harrigan School is committed to continuous improvement and has developed a climate for learning based on meeting the needs of individual students. The principal has a clear vision for the school. She has been successful in bringing about steady, year on year improvement and has the full support of her two, relatively new, assistant principals. The high level of collaboration and shared decision making has resulted in a cohesive and focused school community, which many comment, feels like a family. Parents are actively involved in the day-to-day life of the school and are encouraged to contribute to the achievement of the school's goals. High expectations drive staff, students and parents to reflect on what is working well and what needs to be improved. Since the last Quality Review, for example, the in-depth focus on math has resulted in some strong assessment systems to identify individual student needs. Families have given good feedback on the improvements made to the after school program. The school has made use of the lessons learned from the focus on math as a starting point for the work of the inquiry team. It anticipates that the in-depth case studies by three teams of teachers will help identify trends and patterns to inform future goal setting.

Teachers know their students very well and collect an extensive amount of data, which they use to differentiate instruction, often re-grouping on a lesson-by-lesson basis. The school makes good use of a range of whole school data to measure its overall performance and progress over time. A data specialist has started to develop ways in which the school can make greater use of technology to collate, analyze and disseminate data more efficiently. The school recognizes the inconsistency in the monitoring of the performance and progress of special education students, yet sees there are examples of best practice on which to build.

Differentiation is well embedded and central to the teaching of literacy through a workshop model and a balanced approach for math. A strong partnership with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project over ten years has led to ongoing development in literacy. School leaders give professional development and teachers' personal growth a very high priority. There are many opportunities for staff to work together in teams to share ideas and expertise and evaluate the effectiveness of different strategies. Students and parents are very appreciative of the wide range of arts and enrichment programs available ranging from fine arts, music and basketball teams, for example, to a food and farming initiative. Recently introduced technology enhances instruction and there are plans to expand this further as resources become available. These activities help to motivate students and engage them in their learning. They really enjoy school, behave well and attendance is high. Relationships throughout the school are excellent.

## **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 strength in this area of the school's work is the detailed data collected by individual teachers about the performance and progress of the students in their class. The school sees the collection and analysis of data as an organic process emerging from what happens in the classroom as well as looking at the whole school picture from test results and other data. Student work is an important source of data. Other sources include Teachers' College running record summary sheets, conference notes, strategy meeting notes and end of unit comprehension assessments. The school makes good use of "assessment envelopes" which follow a student through the school. As well as containing data such as ECLAS and the June reading log, students write a letter to their new teacher. The grouping of English language learners into one class on each grade, and the collaborative working of the English as second language teacher enables very effective monitoring of their progress. The school has been able to track their steady and continuous progress over the last six years. Their results in English language arts have increased from 61.1% in 2001 to 86% in 2007. The school's data specialist has begun work on the implementation of the ARIS system and is exploring ways to use technology to greater effect so that staff can collect and access data more efficiently.

The tracking of the performance and progress of special education students at individual and class level is inconsistent. Collaborative team-teaching classes generate good data to monitor progress, although not yet to a common format. The systems used in the self-contained classes are insufficiently robust.

**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 well developed.**

Shared decision-making and collaboration are at the heart of the way the school operates. Staff, students and parents are all part of this process and, as a result set high expectations for each other. The annual planning process begins with an administration retreat in April and then the whole staff take part in May/June planning sessions, which culminate in the setting of whole school goals. The need to make improvements for special education students arose out of staff consultation and resulted in increased push-in and collaborative team teaching.

Parents take an active part in working towards the achievement of goals through the various sub-committees of the school leadership team. Recent goals include arts, diversity, and food and farming. The weekly notes to staff, "This week at PS29" are an effective way of communicating goals, plans and priorities in the shorter term. The detailed staff handbook, which is up-dated annually to reflect the amended goals, provides further guidance. The school handbook clearly sets out the school's expectations. There are two curriculum nights in September where parents have an opportunity to hear about structures, goals and expectations as well as meeting with the class teacher. Students have opportunities to take part in setting their own goals in individual conferences.

Excellent use is made of end of year narratives that accompany progress reports. Teachers write a detailed account for each student; these clearly articulate academic and personal progress with clear goals for further improvement. Parents are positively encouraged to take an active role in the life of the school and many do so. The school invites parents to complete a student information sheet providing as much detail they can about the strengths, fears, hopes and needs of their child. The sheet also identifies a range of ways that parents can be involved in the school and they are encouraged to volunteer at an early stage. This has really had a positive impact. There is a very strong parent teacher association working closely with staff to provide resources and coordinate volunteers. The school has a very successful "Families as Learning Partners" initiative on the first Friday of each month during the school day. Parents have an opportunity to work alongside staff and students on a variety of activities as evidenced by a recent "Families as Art Partners" session.

**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 outstanding.**

The school makes excellent use of data to differentiate instruction through whole class and group teaching. The strong emphasis on the development of literacy and math means that teachers constantly match instruction to the needs of the individual. This is very evident in the detailed planning and assessment that takes place on a daily basis. Much effort has gone into aligning resources to keep class sizes small to support this. Teachers know their students very well. The school has created a climate of genuine mutual respect supporting students to be independent learners. There is a very strong focus on helping students to take responsibility and play a real role in the school community, be it as peer mediators or "taste-testers" for the new school menus! The curriculum is very broad with good links across curriculum areas. For example, curricular calendars in social studies and the arts align with work in literacy and math. Drama, fine arts, science, library research and movement are examples of the special classes. Examples of extra curricular activities include chess, strings, band, chorus, basketball and overnight trips.

Enrichment activities emerged from an interest survey for staff and students. Food and farming, a recent initiative based on the concept of students growing food on a working farm is developing well. This also connects to the strong promotion of healthy lifestyles through diet, physical education and wellness. The developing use of technology, including smart boards, increasingly enhances instruction. School leaders intend to continue this development as resources become available, recognizing its potential to take instruction and learning to even higher levels. The school has been particularly successful in developing a baseline of classroom expectations, which hold teachers to account on a set of 'non-negotiable' standards. These are set out in the "Classroom Environment Checklist" and have specific criteria for classrooms including, for example, the daily agenda, classroom library, math center, writing center, corridor displays and reading assessment binders. Relationships are excellent, teachers demonstrate a significant commitment to meeting students' individual needs, both academic and personal. Unsurprisingly, attendance is high.

**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 well developed.**

Professional development has a very high priority. It is a key component in raising standards by building capacity and sharing good practice. School leaders recognize the importance of encouraging teachers' personal and professional growth and involve staff in the decision-making processes to identify appropriate training. Good use is made of surveys to identify needs in addition to the data collected from walkthroughs and observations. School leaders make every effort to recognize the gifts and talents of staff and use them make sure to help others. For example, teachers with expertise in the use of smart boards provide training, support and demonstrations for others. The extent to which this is a part of the culture of the school is evident in a recent development. The principal has identified and agreed short-term goals with individual teachers, subsequently shared with the whole staff to help them support each other. Teachers have opted for three six week cycles of Mondays for professional development, built around short-term professional objectives. Very good use is made of staff developers and there are many opportunities for intervisitation. There is a well-developed grade team structure with regular meetings of grade leaders and grade teams to share ideas and solve problems. The new assistant principal, until very recently a classroom teacher, provides good support for new teachers in addition to a mentor on the grade. Activities include coaching, demonstrations, planning and data analysis. Clearly set out standards and expectations, in addition to the "Classroom Environment Checklist" mentioned earlier result in a highly effective learning environment where behaviour is excellent. Many strong partnerships enhance learning such as that with the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music providing an impressive range of musical activities.

**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 well developed.**

The principal had a clear vision for the school when she took up her appointment seven years ago. She has worked consistently towards achieving it and has created a strong collaborative community who are working together in a climate of continuous improvement. The reflective approach and success to date means the school has an excellent capacity to effect change. Planning is robust and goals well communicated. Each identified priority has a series of strategies to achieve the objectives with built in outcomes and interim timeframes to measure progress. Data is in constant use to monitor performance of individuals and classes. There is frequent revision of plans at grade leader meetings and weekly grade meetings because of data collected from ongoing observations. Assessment procedures are highly defined enabling the modification of plans at many levels. School leaders recognize that improved use of technology would help track trends more efficiently. The school's focus on math demonstrates its effectiveness in developing rigorous assessment processes to measure effectiveness. Good use is made of staff, parent and student surveys to evaluate the progress in diversity and multiculturalism. This information is subsequently used by the diversity committee. This is an example of the effective evaluation of the success of plans and goals and the use of the outcomes inform planning for the subsequent year. Priorities are often, and appropriately, developmental rather than brand new priorities.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: John M Harrigan School</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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 demanding, 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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				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?					X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>					<b>X</b>

**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?					X
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					<b>X</b>

**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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					<b>X</b>