



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Charles O Dewey School**

**Middle School 136**

**4004 4 Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11232**

**Principal: Eric Sackler**

**Dates of review: May 27 - 28, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Ronnie Young**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Charles O Dewey is a middle school with 458 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 3.7% Black, 88.2% Hispanic, 3.7% White, 3.7% Asian, and 0.5% American Indian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 95.8% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal, ably assisted by the assistant principal, provides strong, inspirational and dynamic leadership.
- There is great determination by the administration to force through change.
- The school uses innovative strategies to improve the performance of individual and groups of students.
- Staff and students have high expectations of themselves and of each other leading to a very positive working atmosphere.
- The curriculum is broad and tailored to the interests and aspirations of students with an emphasis on the arts and technology.
- Effective and consistently applied procedures result in a high and increasing attendance rate.
- Frequent and targeted teaching observations have facilitated differentiated improvement strategies for teachers.
- Intervisitation of classes by teachers is routine and well established and helps to spread good practice.
- The administration and staff use innovative ways to engage all students which has improved discipline as well as achievement.
- The budget has been used imaginatively to provide exciting learning experiences for students, which raise self-esteem.

### What the school needs to improve

- Seek out similar schools with whom to compare, so good practice can be shared.
- Include more parents in goal setting and student improvement so good practice may be continued at home.
- Spread good practice in differentiation so it becomes the norm in all classes.
- Involve students in setting and monitoring their own goals so they become more responsible for their own learning.
- Break down goals in the school into small, achievable increments that are measurable and time limited.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### **Overall Evaluation**

#### **This school is proficient.**

The principal has been in place for less than two years and he has spent that time working to improve behavior and low achievement levels. He provides strong, inspirational and dynamic leadership and he is determined to ensure appropriate change to raise achievement and self-esteem in all his students.

The administration has prioritized data collection analysis and use and the vast majority of teachers now feel comfortable with using it to plan more effectively. The school has had notable successes in using data to identify weaknesses and, for example, has improved some grade 7 girls' mathematics scores and boys' English language arts scores by implementing single sex classes. The school uses other innovative methods to raise self-esteem, improve behavior and increase attendance to over 92%, such as meditation sessions at the beginning of the class. As a result, staff and students have high expectations of themselves and of each other and there is a positive, optimistic atmosphere across the whole school. The curriculum is broad and successfully designed to excite and inspire students. Technology is used widely and the walls are covered with high quality art and craft work which is a specialism of the school. There are good opportunities to extend students' experiences with exciting school trips and there is a range of creative and sporting pursuits which students can follow during and outside the school day.

However, there is still much work to be done. The principal does not compare his school with others, as he feels the school is unique. This means he cannot easily share good practice. Although students have goals, they are vague and non-measurable, so students know what they are working towards, but not exactly how to attain it. Ownership of the goals by students is missing so some students feel no responsibility to achieve those goals. Finally, although parent participation in the school is growing, it is still not at a level where all parents can actively help their children with their goals.

The inquiry team works well and is currently tracking some English language learners whose parents have taken English lessons at the school to see if their English improves at a faster rate than a group whose parents have not had the training. The school has made some progress on last year's Quality Review recommendations. Teacher binders have facilitated more systematic use of data and differentiation is increasing in classes although there is still inconsistency. Student portfolios are now used across the curriculum to track students more carefully, and there are more opportunities for parent participation in the life of the school, in, for example, adult education classes for English and computing and the parent teacher association.

## **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 proficient.**

Since the last Quality Review, the school has worked hard to improve its collection, analysis and use of all student data, including that for special education students and English language learners. Professional development has led to teachers becoming more practiced at using ARIS, Acuity and the GROW report to ascertain the performance and progress of their students. Each teacher now has a data binder in which to collect this information, along with informal assessments such as student conference notes, quiz results and ongoing class and homework. A small but growing number of staff are also compiling individual student binders to track students more easily and identify trends and possible problems.

The school has good systems for ascertaining the progress of ethnic and gender groups in the school. Because the student population is largely Hispanic, the school has started to break down its ethnicity data into different countries and cultures to identify trends and differences, and so far has found little significance in the data. Working closely with gender data, however, the school discovered grade 7 girls performed worse than the boys so experimented with two single sex classes for all subjects to see if the results improved. The teachers who taught these "experimental" classes, taught the rest of the students in the grade, so the school used the non-single sex classes as a control group. Present data shows girls in the all-female class improved in mathematics and boys in the all-male class improved in English language arts. As a result, the school is now going to increase the number of single-sex classes across the school.

The principal does not compare his school with others. He feels many of the school's problems are to do with external factors unique to this school. He is still seeking, therefore, schools with a similar population and issues so performance and progress can be compared on an equal basis and good practice may be shared.

**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.**

The school has improved the performance and behavior of many of its students by focusing on certain groups and looking for innovative ways to engage them and raise their self-esteem. A group of students who were falling behind in English language arts, for example, have joined a group of high functioning English language learners in the same grade and that has improved their basic English skills. A group of grade 8 students with behavioral difficulties is taught in a very small class so they can learn in a more intimate and individualized way. A class of boys who have low concentration levels starts each day with a 10-minute meditation session, which has been found to improve their focus. The school has academic intervention for all students scoring below the expected standard to increase rates of progress. There are intervention sessions on Saturday mornings and before and after school, funded by supplemental education services and these have been found beneficial in raising achievement across the school.

Staff and students have very high expectations of each other, leading to a very positive working atmosphere. A growing number of parents now participate in school activities and their expectations of the school are also high. One parent said, “The school expects every student to achieve.” However, there is still more work for the school to do so more parents can be involved in the achievement of individual goals for their children.

Although staff collaborate to set student goals, in common preparation periods, for example, students themselves do not play enough part in either setting or monitoring their goals. This has led to student goals being quite vague – for example, one student said his goal was “to do my work”. Another said it was “to study hard”. Students know what they have to do, but are unsure how to do it or when they have achieved it.

**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 proficient.**

The curriculum is broad and the school has tried hard to make it as engaging as possible, emphasizing art and technology. The school has invested heavily in technology and there are laptops and Smart boards in most classrooms, which have captured students’ interests and improved their skills. Consequently, special education students are able to take a technicians’ certificate “the Mouse Squad” which is recognized nationally. Art is a specialism of the school and is integrated into classes where possible, as well as being taught separately, and a variety of after school activities give students opportunities in music, dance and in sport. These activities lead to increased attendance and motivation to attend the school. The principal has made imaginative use of the budget to provide experiences for students that will excite their interests and expand their knowledge. An example is the school trips, which are open to all students – this year to Costa Rica, to explore the rain forest, and to South Dakota to look for dinosaur bones. Both these expeditions produced a plethora of work in a variety of media that engaged students. These trips have helped to raise levels of mutual trust and respect between staff and students.

The school has prioritized good attendance this year and this has resulted in a current rate of 92.6% which is the second highest in the school’s peer group. Students who are late three times have in-house detention and the parent coordinator telephones students daily who are absent. The deans and attendance officer then make house visits. The school is working hard to introduce differentiated activity into all its classes, but there is still some whole class teaching that does not pay attention to the individual needs of the students in the class sufficiently well. The coaches are giving ongoing professional development across the school to ensure differentiation is used routinely.

**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 proficient.**

The principal and assistant principal aim to observe every teacher informally each week, providing effective feedback, and this frequency has resulted in a differentiated strategy of

improvement for every teacher. Intervisitation of classes by teachers is routine and well-established in the school and enables teachers to learn from one another. Some teachers share classrooms, so are used to working cooperatively, but the principal encourages all teachers to visit other classrooms so good practice can be spread, especially in the case of teachers who are new to the profession. Staff are practiced at giving constructive feedback to colleagues who find it useful in improving instruction, especially if they have students in common.

The school has very clear policies and procedures that help the school to run smoothly. Discipline and good behavior have improved across the school as staff behave consistently and fairly with all students. The guidance counselors provide effective in-school support and the school has a close relationship with the District Attorney's Truancy Office and the youth officers from the precinct. The local community takes these agencies very seriously and the partnerships have helped to overcome unhelpful influences from outside the school as a result. The principal has been robust in defining all staff roles and responsibilities in the school with clear guidelines and job descriptions. This has facilitated team work and helped to identify staffing needs.

**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 proficient.**

Goals for special education students are measurable, time limited and incrementalized in individual education plans. However, most academic goals for general education students are not well enough defined. The school has introduced behavior contracts for some students and attendance goals for a minority, but again, they are neither measurable nor incrementalized. This makes it difficult for students to know exactly what they are aiming for and how to reach the desired outcome. Goals for individual staff have some element of measurement if time limitation, in that they are set with the principal during one to one sessions in September then reviewed at the end of the academic year. This helps the principal to differentiate improvement strategies for the staff.

As staff become more practiced at using the New York computerized assessments and analyzing their own data, they are becoming quicker and more effective at revising plans for students. School leaders are quick to revise strategies for the school, and always go onto the next goal, once the first has come to fruition. The volatile nature of many of the students has meant staff have had to be aware of their varying needs as much as possible. Part of the vision the principal has for the school is the culture of individualized programming based on solid evidence. As staff become more aware of the needs of the students, this is slowly becoming a reality.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Charles O Dewey Middle 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 rigorous, 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 and tardiness?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X		

**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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				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>					
			X		

**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>					
			X		

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>