



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Christa McAuliffe School

Middle School 187

**1171 65th Street,
Brooklyn
New York 11219**

Principal: Justin Berman

Dates of review: October 9 – 10, 2007

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Christa McAuliffe School is a middle school with 998 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 0.9% Black, 6.7% Hispanic, 31.7% White and 60.7% Asian students. The student body includes 1.2% English language learners and 3.6% special education students. Boys account for 49.9% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50.1%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 97.3%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school is a specialized selective school for gifted and talented students, and it also has three classes of special education students for whom this is the designated school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Data is collected, analyzed and used extensively and routinely, giving staff extensive knowledge of their students' performance and progress.
- There is an excellent range of enrichment activities and opportunities both during and outside the school day, which includes the arts and a foreign language.
- The school's broad curriculum enhances learning and leads to very high achievement in State tests across the school.
- The extensive use of computer technology, both inside and outside the classroom, broadens the range of learning strategies and engages students.
- All students are polite, well behaved and respectful and show high levels of enthusiasm for learning.
- Clear systems and procedures allow the school to run smoothly.
- Managers, faculty, students and parents have very high expectations of themselves and each other.
- Special education classes are well differentiated according to ability, student need and task.
- The special education curriculum has a vocational and life skills emphasis, which enables students to be as independent and self-sufficient as possible.

What the school needs to improve

- Introduce differentiated activity into all classes with as much emphasis on how students learn as on what they learn.
- Ensure whole school and other goals contain measurable, interim targets that can be revised as necessary.
- Enhance individualized goal setting for all students to give them a greater role in the process.
- Target professional development on the few teachers who are less confident at using data to ensure that all faculty staff are totally secure in its use.

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 Christa McAuliffe School has an excellent system for collecting, disaggregating and analyzing data. The administration and teaching staff use it consistently to track individuals and groups of students throughout the school. The principal has made available abundant professional development and laptops for all teachers to facilitate this. There is speedy intervention for those students identified as needing extra support. There is an extensive curriculum at the school, with many enrichment opportunities both inside and outside school hours. The six-day cycle has allowed students to participate in activities as diverse as Spanish cookery and chess, and the arts are very well represented. The academy system means students feel secure and supported in a close-knit community. Students are polite, well behaved and respectful and are highly enthusiastic learners. As may be expected from a school for gifted and talented students, achievement is high, but students are often dependent on their teachers and not always sufficiently involved in their own learning. The school has extensive knowledge about student performance and progress but does not make full use of it to differentiate learning in the classroom. The very good differentiation in the specialized special education classes provides good practice on which to build. The whole school community has very high expectations of themselves and each other.

Since the last review, the school has continued its efforts to involve more parents by learning more about the cultures of its parents and improving written and oral translations so communications will be better. It has expanded opportunities for self-directed research by including investigative report writing across the curriculum. The Inquiry Team meets regularly and is currently identifying students who could benefit from academic intervention.

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 outstanding.

The school analyzes data extremely well. It has developed an exemplary system of data collection using a commercial database, which has been made user-friendly by the principal. This breaks down data into the progress and performance of every individual student, classroom, grade level and subject, year-on-year. The progress of special groups of interest to the school such as special education students and English language learners is also tracked and the data is organized into the three academies. Where possible, progress and performance are analyzed by item and strand. This main database can be linked to password-protected personal student files, which allow staff to work in a more

targeted way. The school regularly measures its performance and progress against the two other schools for gifted and talented students in the region on both academic achievement and on attendance. The school believes it now has the highest attendance rates of middle schools Citywide. This has encouraged students to continue to attend regularly.

The vast majority of staff feel comfortable using data. This has been facilitated by each teacher receiving their own laptop so data can easily be obtained and analyzed. There has been extensive professional development on data collection, analysis and use, which has been delivered at differentiated levels, although a small minority of staff are aware they need training at an even more basic level. Data collection and analysis is an agenda item at every grade and academy meeting, which demonstrates its importance across the school.

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.

Goals for improvement usually arise from the very effective analysis of the data. For example, when strand data analysis revealed a weakness in investigative report writing in all subjects across all grades, a plan was put into place by the administration for all teaching staff to observe how English language arts staff taught this successfully. All staff were trained and mentored by the English language arts teachers so they could identify investigative report writing in their pacing calendars and use a consistent method of teaching it in their various subjects. This was successful, with improved work in all subjects. There are many opportunities for staff to engage in collaborative processes to accelerate learning such as the weekly academy meetings. The school leadership team has monthly meetings to share and develop school-wide goals to ensure the whole community is represented in the process.

Goal setting for students is well executed for academic intervention and special education. In the former, the third of students with the lowest scaled scores for performance and progress are selected for academic intervention and are carefully set incremental goals. The students’ progress is tracked by the intervention team. This has resulted in improvement for the vast majority of students. Special education students have their progress equally well tracked to ensure they achieve the goals in their individual education plans. Individualized performance reports for all students provide detailed information about academic performance to students and their families. Staff regularly discuss students’ specific areas of strength and weakness, in grade, subject and academy meetings. There are plans to improve this further by enabling each student to meet individually with the guidance counselor to discuss the results of the new initial diagnostic assessment. This is intended to enhance individualized goal setting for all students and give them a greater role in the process.

Managers, staff, students and their parents have very high expectations of themselves and each other and there is a good level of parental involvement. Communications with parents are very good, with regular invitations to provide information about their children to the school.

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 well developed.

The curriculum challenges students and provides meaningful data about them. Staff are successful in motivating students. This was evident in an expository lesson introducing equations to grade 6, which involved using a balance, weights and various manipulatives to demonstrate the theory in a practical way. Staff work collaboratively to introduce cross-curricular themes so learning can be reinforced. There is an excellent enrichment program at the school, which is both broad and engaging. It is open to all students and takes place both during and outside lesson time and includes creative subjects such as art, craft and music, physical education, recreation and games and cultural activities. Every student studies Spanish, which is differentiated for native Spanish speakers. Students can also experience virtual field trips. The breadth of the curriculum is achieved using a six-day schedule so all activities can be included. Computer technology is used extensively across the school, both inside and outside the classroom and broadens the range of learning strategies.

Differentiation is evident in special education classes, where an imaginative curriculum includes vocational and life skills such as office skills, animal care and catering for and managing the school snack bar. However, in general education classes, there is little differentiation except when students get the opportunity to work together on projects. In the classroom, the tendency is for all students within the classes’ narrow ability range to do the same thing at the same time, but this does not make for optimum individual progress. However, students work diligently, showing very high levels of engagement, good behavior and politeness.

Staff hold themselves highly accountable for the progress and learning for students in their charge. Weekly grade and academy meetings are used for problem solving regarding curriculum and student issues, virtually always based on data. Strategic budgeting, scheduling and staffing decisions are also based on data. The money spent on laptops for staff has improved their use of data and that spent on Smart boards and laptops for students in classrooms helps students to work more inter-actively in classrooms. Attendance and punctuality are taken very seriously. Effective and consistently applied procedures, such as a daily telephone call for every day of absence, have helped ensure extremely high attendance levels.

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.

The principal and assistant principals carry out frequent classroom observations, which include pre- and post- observation conferences. These enable staff to discuss aims and expectations for the lesson before the observation and to evaluate the lesson afterwards using lesson plans, pacing calendars and available data. This has helped the principal and administration to target professional development strategically and effectively, based on teacher needs, curriculum initiatives and the perceived needs of students. Intervisitations between staff are used effectively to promote specific aspects of professional development. Support for teachers is good, with extensive professional

development carried out in grade and academy meetings and externally. Teachers new to the school or to teaching have an effective induction, including mentoring by a volunteer teacher, usually from the same academy and subject area, to aid speedy integration into the school. Refinement of data use and analysis is a constant focus for all staff.

There are very clear procedures and systems across the school, which help it to run smoothly. These are reiterated at all staff meetings and during class. Referrals to the deans are falling as a result of this reinforcement. Youth and personal development are regarded as an important part of the success of the whole child. The academy structure acts as a family group for each student. Mutual trust and respect are evident across the school and students feel safe and secure. The deans and guidance counselors provide pastoral support and they meet emotional and behavioral needs effectively. Social, moral and ethical development is encouraged in students by clubs such as the Kiwanis which raises large amounts of money for charity. Students demonstrate high levels of social conscience. The school's partnerships with outside organizations have added to the academic and personal growth of students. For example, the Junior Fellows program run in conjunction with the New York Academy of Medicine and Maimonides Hospital has facilitated medical research projects by students at an extremely high level.

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 school makes very good use of periodic assessments for all students. Teachers and administration work collaboratively to analyze student performance and determine the effectiveness of interventions. The school is very effective at tracking the outcomes of actions and practices, and modifying practice to improve student outcome. For example, when the school realized that many students were reticent and said little in lessons, teachers began to track every student's input, to target specific students during question and answer sessions. This has increased student oral participation across the school. Following each periodic assessment, a data review with teachers and their supervisors' results in immediate modifications to lesson plans and curriculum maps for implementation in the classroom. Good use is made of portfolios of student work to track progress and assess the achievement of goals. Measurable targets are used for school plans such as the Comprehensive Education Plan, but timelines are often long-term and do not always contain measurable interim targets. Teachers' goals are shorter term, with the use of pacing calendars and the discussions pre- and post-observation.

The vision for the school is clear and understood by the whole community, namely to improve the performance of every student according to their potential. The school and all its members know where they want to be. Plans are in place to increase the involvement of students in individual goal setting to accelerate learning.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Christa Mc Auliffe School (MS 187)	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1					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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3					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?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					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 make 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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X