



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Margaret S Douglas Intermediate School**

**Intermediate School 292**

**301 Vermont Street**

**Brooklyn  
NY 11207**

**Principal: Everett Hughes**

**Dates of review: February 6 - 7, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Ronnie Young**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Margaret S Douglas Intermediate School is an intermediate school with 767 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 62% Black, 34% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Native American and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 86.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 78.8% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal, ably assisted by the assistant principals, provides strong leadership to a team of highly committed staff.
- Staff have a very good knowledge of the performance and progress of both individual and groups of students.
- There are high levels of mutual trust and respect between students and teachers and students behave very well in class.
- The excellent performing and fine arts curriculum enriches students' experiences and gives opportunities for success that are non-academic.
- The school collaborates with a wide range of outside bodies to enhance and enrich the curriculum.
- The administration, teachers, students and parents have very high expectations of themselves and of each other.
- Strategies for decreasing absence and lateness have increased attendance substantially.
- Professional development is abundant, differentiated, relevant and timely.
- The school makes good use of staff intervisitation to spread good practice and increase collaboration.
- Teachers and the administration are very flexible and quick to change plans and practice as necessary.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure differentiated activities are present in all classes, by level, by task and/or by student interest.
- Use teachers' self-evaluation forms as a vehicle for setting and recording their time-limited, measurable goals.
- Refine and clarify the school vision so it becomes the driving force across all members of the school community.
- Ensure students play a greater part in setting and monitoring their own short-term goals, so they can take more responsibility for their learning

## 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 Margaret S Douglas Intermediate School is happy and well organized and strives to fulfill the potential of all its students. There are high aspirations for the whole learning community, aiming to treat each student as gifted and talented whatever their profile of abilities. The school has developed a curriculum that is both broad and deep. The performing and fine arts curriculum provides a plethora of opportunities for success in artistic, physical and practical ways, and meets the full range of academic abilities. The programs for gifted and talented students allow them to work a full grade above their chronological age. The school uses data very effectively to set high expectations for its students and to provide relevant and timely instructional programs, which help students to reach their goals. Sometimes, however, it does not give students sufficient opportunities to set their own goals. Teachers receive good support, with ample professional development and opportunities to share good practice, and they repay this with high levels of commitment and regard for the students. They differentiate some work to fulfill students' individual needs, although this is inconsistent. Staff are flexible and are quick to change plans and practices as necessary, an example being the annual revision of the school curriculum.

The principal, with the support of his assistant principals, provides excellent leadership. He is constantly visible and accessible to all staff, parents and students. As one teacher said, "He is the glue that holds the school together," and the school is indeed a closely-knit, warm and friendly place, with high levels of mutual respect and trust. Parents are encouraged and welcomed into the school continually, although there are still too many who play little part in their children's education. The school is very clear about its own direction and aims but although its objectives are clear, it does not share the strategies for fulfilling or help students to be sufficiently proactive to take responsibility for their own learning.

The inquiry team meets regularly and is following a group of grades 6 and 7 students who score low level 2 or 1 on standardized tests, with a view to devising a profiling model to target interventions more accurately. Since the last Quality Review, the good progress made includes professional development on differentiation, which has raised awareness and increased its use. The school is making increasing use of technology to interpret and store data strategically. The use of an attendance teacher has increased attendance. Work is still underway to increase parent representation on the school leadership team and deeper involvement in the life of the 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 the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed**

Staff at the school have a very clear understanding of the performance and progress of their students. Each class has a useful data folio containing all standardized test results, teacher analyses and predictive scores that act as a complete record of where a student is academically in any core subject at any given time. Folios follow students through the school, in order to track them longitudinally, both as cohorts and as individuals. Many teachers have computerized their records, giving further flexibility, and spreadsheets from ARIS, Scantron and Acuity have formed the basis of a school-wide computerized system. Ongoing professional development has helped staff to become adept at collecting and analyzing data. They speak of the usefulness of being able to show individual strengths and weaknesses in skill areas

All data is broken down rigorously so staff members are able to track specific groups of interest. Special education students receive instruction separately, mainly in self-contained classes, but the school has been able, having analyzed the data, to make up two combined team teaching classes. The school carefully tracks English language learners for pullout tuition. It monitors ethnicity and gender very well in order to put systems into place for groups needing any specialist intervention. For example, the school is experimenting with single gender classes in grade 8. Separate classes for boys have alleviated behavior problems and increased student learning. Girls' groups, for those falling behind, have helped to build up their self-esteem, leading to greater motivation. The school has chosen teachers carefully to match gender and ethnicity where it is a factor.

The school makes rigorous comparison of data against other cohort schools and others in Brooklyn with gifted and talented programs. It compares curriculum and professional development as well as performance and progression scores. The principal is quick to contact schools with better performances to explore the possibility of sharing good practice.

**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.**

The school has well embedded systems for setting goals for students. It focuses particularly on students who are on the cusp of levels, those receiving academic intervention or English language support, special education students and any students at risk of hold over or dropping out. Those students are then divided into "hot list", "focus group" and "at risk", depending on the urgency of interventions. Teachers work closely with the administration to set long- and short-term goals for students, which are time limited and measurable. Some students play little active part in this discussion, however, so do not take full responsibility for their progress, other than to "work harder", which may not be the most useful strategy for them.

The school displays the whole school goals all over the building, includes the projected increases in scores year on year, and the plans for school initiatives. This means students and staff are very well informed. It communicates whole school and individual student goals to parents often and in a variety of ways such as, grade induction meetings at the beginning of the school year, emails and letters home and workshops and meetings for

parents. The school sends report cards home regularly, as well as monthly progress reports on social and behavioral matters, in addition to academic. It invites parents to give information about their children, and the principal and staff have open door policies. However, many parents do not communicate regularly, so the school is making ongoing attempts to involve more of them and the parent coordinator is very active in this.

Staff, the administration, involved parents and students have very high expectations of themselves and of each other. The school tries continually to stretch and challenge students. Examples include special education students who all follow the same work as general education classes, and all students in the gifted and talented program studying programs for the grade above. The school displays student work throughout the building and achievement in all fields, including attendance and effort, is celebrated.

**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 school pays great attention to both the breadth and depth of the curriculum. The school writes its own core curriculum, based around Core Knowledge, which provides a thematic, integrated approach, as well as study skills. Use is made of student data to monitor and evaluate the curriculum, which is amended or adapted each summer as necessary. The school organizes classes homogeneously, according to achievement, which provides depth as classes work at different levels. This includes the opportunity for grade 8 gifted and talented students to take Regents examinations in English language arts, integrated mathematics and science. The excellent fine and performing arts curriculum, scheduled for all students for 90 minutes per week, provides breadth. This is also available after school and on Saturdays. Ballroom dancing, African drumming, photography, computer repair and martial arts are just a few of the choices on offer, and staff, students and parents speak of the rise in self-esteem and confidence this program has given students, especially those who do not have high achievement academically.

The main way the school differentiates work is through the homogenous grouping. Differentiated activities form part of some classroom practice, but instruction in some classes, especially those for higher achievers, is didactic and whole group. This is a lost opportunity for proactive learning for many students. However, behavior in class is very good. Students show high levels of engagement and there is obvious mutual trust, respect and regard between staff and students. Students speak of the school as “a place of safety” and as their second home. Said one, “The staff treat us as if we’re their family.”

Measures for increasing attendance have been very successful this year. The school has appointed an attendance teacher and implemented “helping involve parents” automated system to alert parents to students’ absences and lateness. Teachers make frequent phone calls home. There are incentives in place, such as pizza parties and certificates for good attendance. These measures have resulted in a six percent increase in attendance so far this year.

**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 are very visible around the school and teachers expect to see one of their administration in their classes at least daily. Walkthroughs and observations always result in some sort of feedback and this forms part of the teachers’

professional development. The school provides at least 90 minutes internal staff development per week, differentiated and targeted, according to teachers' skills and experience levels. At the end of each year, teachers fill in a useful self-evaluation of their year's work. Use is made of this, along with current data, in designing professional development programs, so they are relevant and timely. A very effective staff development exercise has been for all teachers to take the relevant State tests, to give them more insight into targeted teaching. The school has well established intervisitation to provide teachers with support or to spread good practice. Teachers also visit other schools, for the same reasons. One teacher said, "Visiting other classes and schools is part of the culture of the building."

The school emphasizes youth development and support. Study skills are implicit in the curriculum and daily sessions with homeroom teachers provide advisory opportunities. There is a guidance counselor for each grade and one is bilingual, to facilitate support for parents as well as students. The counselors are very visible, often in classes to observe students and this has given students opportunities to voice worries and avoid emotional problems. Students' emotional and social welfare is of great importance in the school and other measures, such as journal entries and personal story telling in English language arts have helped the close relationship between students and staff. Students feel secure with the clearly displayed rules, procedures and policies, which staff followed consistently.

The school has partnerships with a number of outside bodies, which enrich the curriculum and increase opportunities of various kinds for students. American Ballroom Theater, Soul Tigers Drum Line and Ken Cobra Karate are among organizations that support the performing arts curriculum. Brienza Academic Advantage, Education Station, and the Groundwork after school program are some of the organizations, which assist with extended day and academic tuition.

**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.**

Students undergo a large amount of periodic assessment, such as Acuity, Scantron, predictive and unit tests. This means teachers are able to monitor their goals continually and evaluate them every two weeks so there is always a clear and up to date picture of their progress, with suitable, measurable time frames. There is less organization in the plans for improving teacher outcomes. The school does not formally record them, although they are implied or noted in self-evaluations. This has led to some difficulty in monitoring and evaluating the plans and they are not always time-framed, nor measurable.

Staff are extremely flexible and change plans or practices immediately if data shows it to be desirable. The school revises the curriculum each year and lessons are adapted all the time. As one teacher said, "I almost never use the same lesson plan twice, even from day to day." The assistant principals, each of whom leads a curriculum area, work with teachers to produce curriculum skills packs to personalize lessons for classes and to target skills deficiencies revealed by the data. The cycle in this school is continuous and effective. Student data leads to the evaluation of the curriculum, which leads to changes in teaching and learning, and then further student assessment.

All members of the school community talk about a vision for the school but it is not a clear, shared vision nor articulated in a concise or meaningful way. Certainly "achievement", "progress", "potential" and "success" are common words, but strategies for achieving these are hazy. This impedes shared ownership by and clear direction for all students, parents and staff.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Margaret S Douglas Intermediate 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	

<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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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>				<b>X</b>	

<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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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>	

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