



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Middle School 381  
1599 East 22 Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11201**

**Principal: Mary Harrington**

**Dates of review: October 18, 19 and 22, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Jill Bavin**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Middle School 381 is a middle school with 382 students from grade 6 through grade 9. The school population comprises 53% Black, 20% Hispanic, 21% White and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.3%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school is located in a five-floor building which it shares with an elementary school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal, well supported by her cabinet, promotes a strong, shared vision for continual school improvement.
- Teachers provide consistently good instruction which successfully engages students.
- Teachers use data well to plan lessons, inform instruction and meet differing needs within the class.
- The curriculum has been successfully expanded to provide many interesting activities and increase student choice.
- Professional development plans are closely aligned to school goals and also successfully meet differing teachers' needs.
- Teachers support each other well and are prepared to share and so extend good practice
- The school leadership team regularly evaluates the school's work and uses these results to revise plans to improve student outcomes.
- Students enjoy school, feel safe within it and attend well.
- Parents appreciate the extensive two way communication between home and school.
- The school has made good progress in tracking student progress, extending differentiation and developing the curriculum since the previous Review.

### What the school needs to improve

- Expand the use of measurable learning objectives and share them more consistently with students.
- Ensure that routine monitoring of all interim school development plans records outcomes and future action steps consistently to ease evaluation.
- Ensure that the success of new and recent curriculum initiatives are measured, compared against each other and against students' learning outcomes.
- Continue with plans to forge more links with other organizations in order to further enrich students' 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.**

This school is a small school “of choice”. It is a tight knit community characterized by cabinet, faculty and staff knowing students very well. Consequently, there is much professional dialogue to share ideas. Students, and their parents, feel very comfortable because they find the principal and all adults in the school very accessible and approachable. During the Quality Review the security guards received a special mention from students to indicate that they truly valued the contribution to their well-being made by all adults in school. The school has made good increases in students’ achievement levels over recent years because of improved instruction. Cabinet is understandably proud that these have applied to all groups within their increasingly diverse school.

Instruction is consistently interesting and matched to students’ needs. Teachers are eager to share good ideas and find new ways to support students. They use assessment data very effectively to meet differing needs within their classes and accelerate learning for all students. Communication within the school is good. One example of this is the extent to which teachers of different subjects plan shared themes together to assist students’ learning. The school has made a good start in forging further links with other organizations. Students are enthused by the extensive program of enrichment activities, many of which are new this term, which gives them greater choice and independence both within and outside the regular school day.

The school is resolved to ensure that no child is left behind, and expectations for all students are high. There is a close analysis of how well different groups of students are achieving and goals for improvement are identified for each student. Sometimes these are very clearly worded and shared with the student, other times more general skills are shared. Both approaches are helpful but the former makes it easier for the student to be absolutely clear about what they need to do next. The school leadership team reviews and adjusts its plans for whole school development each month. While this is a commendably tight system, and decisions made are shared and discussed with the whole school community, precise points for action and interim goals for whole school development are not always recorded. This means that opportunities to clearly measure success and impact on student outcomes may be lost on occasion.

The recently convened inquiry team has met once and is establishing its game plan. The school has made good progress since the previous Quality Review. The school is focusing on supporting the highest performing students. Teachers are consistently differentiating instruction. The science and social studies curriculum has expanded and the school provides more after school activities.

## **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.**

Teachers use a good range of formal and informal assessment procedures to keep a check on both student progress and achievement. They keep a personal education plan for each student where information is collected ready for frequent conferencing with the student, the family or colleagues. These are also used for special education students and English language learners. The schedule for reviewing these documents far exceeds the City requirements. Additionally, there are detailed ongoing portfolios of data about the progress and achievement of special education students, providing a very helpful analysis of their growing strengths and their needs. Professional development has successfully ensured that teachers are confident in their use of data. They see its value in influencing what they do in the classroom and this is evident in their thorough lesson planning, which reflects the comprehensive regular updating of learning goals.

The school uses its data well to track the progress of different groups of students, for example, according to gender and ethnicity. Consequently, it knows, for example, that all groups have made good progress over recent years. It also knows when boys' progress lags a little behind girls', in which subjects, and when they catch up. The school is aware of student performance in other schools in the neighborhood and the comparisons fire the principal's determination to be the, "number one middle school" in the network within the next two years.

**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.**

A key strength in the school is the extent to which teachers use data to plan, both collaboratively and individually, to set suitably challenging goals for students and inform their instruction. Their accurate analysis of assessment information means that they pinpoint areas of student weaknesses that need to be addressed in order to accelerate learning. This practice has contributed to the school's improved performance over recent years. While there are occasions when teachers are very precise and tell students exactly what they need to do to improve their work with specific and clear objectives, this is not consistent. Goals for students arising from test analyses are often expressed in relatively broad terms, such as "improve number sense", while this plays a useful part in focusing instruction and alerting the student to an area of need, it does not specify exactly what should be done next to raise achievement.

Goals for improving student performance are shared with all members of the school community. Parents receive helpful information about their child's progress through the report cards which are sent at least eight times during the school year. They appreciate the accessibility of teachers who telephone home to report that a student is doing well and having success as well as to share concerns about a student's difficulty. They say this school is, "concerned enough to reach out". The school demonstrates its high expectations

of all students, including special education students by their inclusion in summer school and after school activities.

The school has a well-founded strategic approach to assessment systems. Those students at greatest risk of underachieving receive a tighter schedule of assessment and reporting, which increases the speed and flexibility of response to their needs. This strategic approach makes a significant contribution to the universal increase in students' performance and progress.

**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.**

This school is buzzing with excitement at the new enrichment program. Parents report that grade 8 students are bemoaning that they will have only one year with such a broad choice of subjects and so many independent research opportunities. The school has developed the curriculum strategically, selecting a program to help them address one of their primary goals, which is to meet the needs of higher achieving students. However, the school's commitment to all students, and their inclusive approach to education, means all benefit from the development. It is too soon to measure the impact of the various activities on learning in core subjects, but it has already increased student enjoyment and is further enhancing their personal development.

Other sources of fun and enjoyment are the increasing opportunities for students to use technology, computers in particular. The improved science curriculum which has a strong focus on practical "hands on" activities is very popular. Links between subjects such as English language arts and social studies, and science and math all add interest. The principal and cabinet skillfully and strategically hire and schedule staff with a very close eye on the best way to meet the school's current priorities. Teachers feel a strong sense of professional responsibility for their students' learning. They are consistently planning differentiated instruction and beginning to apply this to homework. These strengths contribute to the shared drive of continual improvement and high expectations. Families have selected this school for their children and students enjoy school, nevertheless the school maintains a strong focus on the importance of attendance and punctuality. Students understand that whatever their academic score they cannot get onto the honor roll without 100% attendance, and this is a prize they value.

**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.**

There is a very close alignment between whole school professional development and the school's paramount priority to raise the bar for the increasing number of students recognized as higher achieving. The principal and administration undertake frequent, focused, formal and informal classroom visits to monitor teaching, learning and achievement. For example, they check how well teachers are implementing the school's priority for differentiation meticulously, through monitoring their planning, observing what actually happens in class and reviewing the outcome in students' work. This

comprehensive system means that administration knows the faculty's strengths well and where to provide effective individual support. New teachers benefit not only from the strong support of their assigned mentor but also from the school's culture of mutual support and open communication. All colleagues are willing to help each other.

There is a strong team of support staff available to students, whatever their academic or learning needs, with the result that students feel very secure and confident that they have a choice of adults to turn to if they need help. Students have considerable confidence in their principal and describe her as "strict but very kind". They enjoy sharing their views over regular grade breakfasts with her and know that if they write to her, their views will be considered fully and respectfully and may effect change. Suitable partner organizations help to inform instruction and enrich student experience, such as the links with John Hopkins University in Baltimore, and the Alvin Ailey professional dance company. However, the school recognizes that further work is required in this area and involved parents are working with the school to create new partnerships to extend high quality links for students and teachers.

**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 is good at monitoring and reviewing the progress of individual students. Clear and constructive communication between faculty and cabinet means that the cabinet has a good understanding of what is occurring in classrooms and it uses this rich data to evaluate what is working well, or not so well, in school. This systematically and effectively feeds the monthly reviews of the Comprehensive Education Plan, which is when goals and plans are modified. The school has started to analyze the effectiveness of curriculum initiatives but does not fully explore any patterns in their impact on students' learning.

The school sets agendas for the monthly Comprehensive Education Plan review meetings and minutes are kept. However, records are not always kept of the precise decisions made and who is going to lead on taking action before the next meeting. Links between the school's evaluation and revising plans exist and are shared but are not always apparent in documentation. Systems work as well as they do because the school is small and verbal communication is tight. However, the school is growing. It is aware that it is missing opportunities to tighten its review procedures further, and so make evaluating ever more aspects of its work easier and more manageable.

The principal's vision for the school to be "as wonderful as possible" and to move to "first place" among middle schools in terms of academic achievement and popularity is widely shared. School development is planned strategically and the school is constantly reflecting and reviewing its progress. Consequently, performance is improving, teachers are eager to build further on their successes and students are highly engaged.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Middle School 381 (MS 381)</b>	△	▶	✓	+	◇
<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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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	

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

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