



October 25, 2007

Ms. Jeannemarie Hendershot
New York City Department of Education
Office of Portfolio Development
52 Chambers Street, Room 405
New York, NY 10007

Dear Ms. Hendershot:

We are in receipt of the Quality Review Report for Beginning with Children Charter School and cover letter dated Oct. 11, 2007 which describes the findings of our annual oversight visit on May 4, 2007. It is gratifying to receive such positive feedback. This report helps us to validate the processes in place to support student achievement while providing an analysis that will assist us in further development of our school improvement initiatives.

We would like to commend the team which conducted the visit. The team members were thorough, professional, enthusiastic and cordial. Although the process was rigorous, all stakeholders were treated with respect and consideration. The debriefing session was especially informative and gave us valuable insight into planning for the current school year.

We agree with the majority of the findings and commentary. We would like to respond to certain sections of the content and there is one area where we are seeking clarification.

While we have helped some of our students to identify their individual learning style, we cannot claim that we have used with this method with our entire student body. We do address how instruction supports the needs of visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners during informal and formal observations.

The practice of "vision setting" has been further defined as philosophy statements in our school discussions. We do not wish to promote multiple visions for our organization. Our renewal committee spent a considerable amount of time on our vision statement. The philosophy statements reflect our thoughts about child development and how we seek to enrich the experiences of our students as they evolve at three critical stages.

While it is true that we have had some instability in our middle school English Language Arts department, we dispute that this was due to the lack of common planning time. One of our teachers resigned early in the term citing health and personal reasons, not scheduling conflicts. In fact, our middle school English Language Arts teachers had daily time to plan with each other and our on site staff developer.

Our Walk Through Team had three teacher members at the time of the oversight visit. We categorically value their input and invited each one to join us again in this effort during the current school year.

Our students are frequently grouped for instruction. In some cases there are four groups but this number does not apply to every grade. Many variables factor into decisions about how we make these arrangements.

We would appreciate the specific examples which led the team to make the following statements:

“The Board needs to do more to empower individuals and allow them to carry out the responsibilities and daily operations of the school.”

“The school board has good potential given the expertise on the board; however, it appears that several decisions are not being made at decentralized level.”

It would be helpful to have a more detailed account of the references made to individuals and the decision making process.

We are pleased to note that all issues raised in the previous oversight report were addressed by our school. We welcome the opportunity to use the content of this report as a tool for growth and development.

Sincerely,
Cynthia Bailey
Principal