



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Ditmas School

Junior High School 62

**701 Cortelyou Road
Brooklyn
NY 11218**

Principal: Barry Kevorkian

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Lead Reviewer: Chris Andrews

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Ditmas is a junior high school with 1107 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 41% Black, 33% Hispanic, 7% White, and 19% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 9% 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 92.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 91% eligibility.

The school is divided into three academies.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- There is a very strong collaborative culture within the school with all members of the school community actively engaged with the development of students.
- Data that is relevant and useful is collected and used give a clear understanding of student progress and to inform instruction and planning.
- Students are engaged by very good instruction and by a wide range of valuable activities both within and outside the school day.
- Relationships within the school are excellent and contribute positively to the progress of students.
- Professional development for teachers is planned strategically to meet the needs of the school but is flexible enough to meet teachers' needs equally effectively.
- Partnerships with a range of outside agencies positively contribute to student development, particularly in the use of technology and the meeting of school goals.
- Support is given to students with particular needs and enables them to make progress both socially and academically.
- The management of resources is good and maximizes student learning opportunities.
- Systems and procedures allow the school to operate effectively and safely, and so contribute to a positive climate for learning.
- Students enjoy coming to school, are appreciative of their teachers and respond positively to opportunities provided for them.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop further the analysis of data in terms of student subgroups to ensure that no opportunities are missed to enhance student progress.
- Ensure that students' goals are measurable, and that they are able to monitor their own progress towards these goals effectively.
- Further develop teachers' skills in data handling to maximize the benefits of data analysis.
- Make whole school goals and expectations more explicit to the wider school community, and ensure that progress towards these goals is clearly benchmarked for all.

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 well developed.

The Ditmas junior high school is an institution which values the individual very highly and which believes that collaboration, whether between students or among staff, is central to achieving excellence. The principal is energetic and highly visible in the school. He has a vision which is shared by the wider school community. His intimate knowledge of the school, its neighborhood and its students ensure that his aspirations are realistic but challenging.

The school, thanks to its close association with JP Chase Morgan, is at the forefront of using technology as a tool to deliver high quality education and test scores show that progress is being made in developing the skills of the students at the school. This sharing of resources not only allows students to develop key skills for the twenty-first century but fosters the community spirit which the administration is determined to develop further.

The perception of the school held by the community in a rapidly changing neighborhood is also central to the vision for the future. Expectations are high and are communicated to parents at conferences and to students but are not shared sufficiently widely with the whole school community. The "principal's classes" express the aspirations of the school in their most concrete form. These classes comprise students from all academies, have highly qualified content teachers for their instruction and students have to continue to perform at the highest levels to retain their places in the class. Students enjoy coming to school, are appreciative of their teachers and respond positively to opportunities provided for them.

The close tracking of student progress, particularly for special education students and English language learners, as they move through the school is reflective of the improvement made since the last review. However, goal setting at student and whole school levels is less well developed as goals are not benchmarked adequately. Professional development is good and includes the use of data. The school recognizes there is an on-going need to train teachers to use data in a more sophisticated fashion and in the context of subgroups within the school community.

The inquiry team has met and has used the data to identify a particular student cohort whose progress has given cause for concern.

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.

The school collects a wide range of information from a variety of sources and uses this to gain a clear understanding of the performance and progress of the students. This is effectively analyzed to provide information that has a positive impact instruction and planning. This is evidenced by the improvement of test scores over time in both English language arts and mathematics and through the clearly differentiated instruction which is prevalent across the school. Teachers are well aware of the progress, strengths and areas for development of each of their students and the contents of their assessment binders clearly show the evidence of their understanding. The collection of data about students with particular needs, whether in special education or English language learners, is good and results from analysis ensures that swift intervention occurs. There is, however, less analysis in terms of gender or ethnicity. The effective tracking of students from year to year is secured by conversations between grade teachers and the transfer of student portfolios from grade to grade. This ensures continuity of instruction at appropriate levels for the students.

Collaborative work with a neighborhood school has enables close comparison and has enhanced instructional techniques through the sharing of learning strategies. As a result of this, a mutually supportive culture has been developed, especially between the coaches and in respect to summer school. Training for teachers in the use of data is effective with a particular focus on recent developments in terms of data analysis systems. This is an on-going need. Teachers have, in particular, used "lunch and learn" sessions to analyze test data together. This common understanding has secured consistency of understanding across academies and grades, and has facilitated planning.

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 organization of the school encourages very close cooperation between academy grade teams. In these teams teachers review data and discuss goals. Because of the joint training and grade discussions, teachers feel extremely confident in planning appropriate instruction to move their students to the next level. The twin roles of the assistant principals provide additional consistency which extends beyond individual academies.

Whole school goals emerge from the data, for example to raise the performance in mathematics of the English language learners who were failing to make their anticipated yearly progress. These goals are both challenging and measurable, but it is not always clear to what extent these goals are explicitly shared with the wider school community. Similarly students set their own goals but these tend to be rather general and difficult to monitor in terms of progress. Parents confirm that communications between school and home are good and that they are provided with guidance to enable them to help their own children. There are good links with the elementary schools and the school begins raising expectations with the students when they are still in grade 5. The principal's class in grades 6 and 7, for the higher performing students from all three academies, is becoming well known and is instrumental in raising the school's profile as an institution which

challenges its most able students as effectively as it supports those in need. Students in these groups clearly relish the opportunities they have been given and respond very positively to the challenge.

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 mandated curriculum is in place and teachers are able to assess their students appropriately to gather requisite data. The use of the Rigor and Kaplan programs in particular provide exceptionally useful data about the students for whose support they are designed. Students are engaged by very good instruction and by a wide range of valuable activities both within and outside the school day. The use of technology in the classrooms, supported by the Our Neighborhood Digital Education Community program (ON DEC), is very strong. All teachers have access to interactive Smart boards and use them both to engage students and to address different learning styles within the classroom.

The assistant principals hold the teachers in their academies accountable for student progress, but through their dual role they also have a responsibility for the content areas in the other academies. They fulfill this role effectively through their observations, walk throughs and meetings with teachers, whether individually or in teams. They in turn are accountable to the principal and the lines of accountability are very clear. The principal is also a regular visitor to classrooms, a fact which parents have noticed and which they greatly appreciate. Instruction and assessment are therefore closely monitored by the administration who are very aware of what happens in the school on a day-to-day basis. As a result, they ensure that instruction is engaging and routinely differentiated in classrooms.

The school’s longitudinal records for each student are based on those received from the elementary schools and are passed from grade to grade. These detailed records of progress ensure that students receive differentiated instruction, and this can be clearly seen in the range of group and individual activities based around common themes in any classroom. The “Blueprint for the Arts” curriculum provides enrichment for students who can choose to follow a program of dance, music, art or the band.

Good resource management has provided the excellent technology facilities and also ensures that teachers can be released for professional development outside of school or for intervisitations within it. The library has been developed as a multi-media resource center and students who are members can also access books in the local library. First day telephoning in respect to absence has had the effect of improving attendance, and good attendance is supported by awards and letters home.

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 program of formal observations is supported by regular walk throughs which allow the administration to monitor instruction. The coaches and the assistant principals are the key figures in supporting teachers, but teachers use their common preparation periods, their grade meetings and also “lunch and learn” sessions to develop their own expertise.

The principal takes every opportunity to develop effective partnerships with the community. The students speak enthusiastically of the Flatbush Development which allows them to combine homework with other activities after school. They enjoy sporting opportunities or the chance to play chess and the "Achieve 3000" program provides a web-based reading and comprehension experience for English language learners. This program can be accessed both in school and at home and in this way the Morgan Chase ON-DEC initiative impacts directly on the progress of a key group of students. The ON-DEC program is continuing to place computers in students' homes and training their parents in computer skills. This therefore involves parents directly in their children's learning, so meeting a school goal of increasing parent participation as well as preparing students for 21st century living

Systems and procedures allow the school to operate effectively and safely, and so contribute to a positive "climate for learning". The administration and particularly the deans are very proactive in ensuring that the school is a secure and safe environment for the students. They minimize the number of behavior incidents by their presence in the neighborhood before and after school, and parents speak highly of this commitment to student well-being.

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 instructional team meetings, every second week, are the key elements in monitoring progress towards school goals. These goals are time related and measurable in terms of their final outcomes, for example in terms of a percentage increase in students at levels 3 and 4. However, these goals are not widely shared, nor are they clearly benchmarked with interim goals. As a result, the administration does not have as clear a picture of the ongoing success of the ac as it might. The assistant principals share data about progress towards school goals within their own academies and content areas at the instructional team meeting. This allows the administration as a whole to review progress on a regular basis and respond to identified concerns. The school leadership team has a less formal role but meets regularly to discuss progress towards the goals.

The instructional team looks not only at levels achieved in each grade but also reviews scale scores to identify students, whether individuals or groups, who are not making the progress anticipated or needed. If required, plans and support are flexibly realigned to meet the need. If there is a concern about instruction, professional development is provided or teachers are partnered with each other to assist in planning and instruction to meet that need. An example of this would be the teaching of mathematics to English language learners where support for these students was being "pushed in" to meet a need and has been retained as the data shows that such support has had a positive impact. Similarly, a move to produce consistency in the approach to writing genres in English language arts and social studies was the result of data analysis and a realization that each content area was well-placed to reinforce the other.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Ditmas School	△	➤	✓	+	◇
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 ...	△	➤	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	➤	✓	+	◇
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 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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X	