



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Nathaniel Hawthorne**

**Middle School 074  
61-15 Oceania Street  
Queens  
NY 11364**

**Principal: Andrea Dapolito**

**Dates of review: October 4 - 9, 2007**

**Reviewer: Peter Lewis**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Nathaniel Hawthorne Middle School is a school with 1029 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 8% Black, 9% Hispanic, 21% White, and 62% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 11% 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 96.3%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has clearly communicated her vision for the school's development and, as a result, this is fully reflected in all aspects of the school's work.
- Leadership is collaborative, thoughtful and successful in bringing about change.
- Guidance and support services are responsive to students' individual needs and are successful in securing improvement in learning.
- A very good range of data is used well at different levels to give a clear picture of student performance and to plan for rapid improvement.
- Students of all abilities are well taught and, as a result, learn rapidly.
- The curriculum is broad and stimulating and promotes students' personal, as well as their academic, growth.
- Professional development, particularly in using data, has a very high profile, is successful and so ensures the school's continuing development.
- The principal and other leaders use a very good range of strategies for monitoring teaching and student performance.
- Staff at all levels are thoroughly committed to their students who are willing learners and respond well to the very high expectations that are set.
- Parents appreciate the good quality of regular information that they receive about the achievement and progress of their children.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the use of data to enable projections of student achievement to be set and used in tracking their progress towards identified goals.
- Develop consistency in the ways in which teachers plan activities to meet the needs of students working at different levels in the same classroom.
- Set measurable timeframes and interim goals in strategic plans to enable progress towards their achievement to be tracked more precisely.

## 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.**

Nathaniel Hawthorne is a well-developed school that is continuing to make rapid improvement. This is because of the very clear vision of the principal that is shared so successfully with staff at all levels. The school provides a broad and well thought out curriculum for its students who are well taught. Examples of excellent teaching are well used by the school in setting the standard of expected practice. Strategies of support and guidance for students are very well planned and monitored, and are effective in developing their learning.

The school has made good progress in addressing the area identified for improvement in the last Quality Review. Analysis of the performance of level 3 and 4 students in the 8th grade led to the introduction of small group opportunities which have had a positive impact on students' motivation and learning. Very good use is made of a wide variety of information that provides the school with a clear picture of how well students are doing; how it can best help them to improve and how it will know that it has been successful. In establishing its Inquiry Team, the school has made a good start in developing its use of data through the development of interim assessments to understand student progress in an even more refined way. A data manager and members of the inquiry team have been identified and systems for analyzing student progress data have been established.

Teachers are good at using data to adjust their planning to meet the students' needs because of the emphasis that the school has placed on developing strategies of differentiation. However, not all teachers consistently specify learning objectives for groups working at different levels within the same class. The school's systems of evaluating the effectiveness of its plans for student improvement are well developed and mean that interventions are rapidly put in place to adjust student learning should this prove necessary. In contrast, strategic and organizational targets lack timescales or clear success criteria, which hamper the school in its ability to monitor progress towards the achievement of these goals.

Relationships and teamwork are strong and reflected in the respect shown by adults to students. Their respect for one another sets an excellent role model that the students follow well. Parents are fully involved and share the view expressed by many staff that they are proud to be associated with 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 across the school make very good use of a wide range of data to identify patterns and trends in students’ learning. As a result, senior staff, teachers and support staff have a thorough knowledge of where interventions need to be made and where different groups of students are learning well. Teachers keep a good track of their students’ learning through the use of assessment binders. This initiative has been successful in ensuring that teachers use data well in planning interventions to secure improvement.

Although the available data is limited, the school has made a good start in tracking the progress of students as they move from one grade to the next. The school has developed its own spreadsheet to improve its understanding of the progress made by different groups of students and this is well understood and used by senior staff in leading discussion with teachers. Data is scrutinized regularly to compare the progress that is made by different groups and classes, which enables leaders to identify good and less effective practice. As a result, leaders have a very clear picture of what works well in the school, and where improvement is required. The very good use made of school-developed progress sheets, for example, clearly shows the gains made by African American students. The school keeps a careful track of the progress made by lower achieving and special education students, as well as those who are English language learners. At the same time, procedures for monitoring the performance of higher achieving students ensure that they are continuing to perform at a high level.

**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 sets appropriate goals for individual students and makes good use of data from tests and conferencing in monitoring their progress through the year. Course work and after school opportunities are planned according to student need and information revealed following analysis of attendance and personal data. Development planning is thorough and well communicated. As a result, there is a very good level of understanding across the school of whole school and student goals. Despite this good practice, the lack of projected targets for student achievement and the absence of interim plans and time-frames, hampers leaders in monitoring progress towards whole school goals for improvement.

Teachers make good use of a wide range of assessments in understanding student achievement. This is particularly successful in identifying students who require different levels of intervention, and in planning work which will address gaps in their learning. At the same time, the needs of higher achieving students are also understood, which helps teachers in planning work which is appropriately challenging. This has helped, for example, in developing strategies of differentiation in lessons, and the school has clear plans for making this a more consistent feature of instruction. The development of assessment binders has had a positive impact on teachers’ ability to keep a track of student progress and this is well linked to an understanding of student achievement at the start of the year. As a result, because of the continuous nature of the data that is now

collated, the school can not only identify and target students who can be moved between levels, it is also able to focus support to ensure that they do not slip back. These features reflect the very high expectations that characterize the school's work. Parents feel completely involved and are tremendously proud of the progress that the school helps their children to make.

**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 has ensured that its curriculum planning is very clear and thoroughly aligned with requirements. The development of curriculum maps ensures a good understanding of the required progression through concepts and subjects. Across the school, the curriculum is designed to maximize the opportunities available for students to learn through areas that reflect their interests and their capacity. The school has, for example, maintained a strong emphasis on the arts which results in heightened levels of student motivation. A very good start has been made in establishing links between subjects through, for example, the recently established math and science journals, which provide good opportunities for developing writing skills in these subjects. Teachers demonstrate a very high commitment to their students and readily describe their accountability for their own students' learning. For example, they recognize the degree to which students' future learning depends on the work that they are doing now.

This commitment reflects the lead taken by the principal, assistant principals and literacy coach in helping teachers move from a traditional, 'didactic' model of instruction towards one which is more inquiry and group-based. Although much has been achieved in helping teachers to use data to plan different activities for different students, good strategies are in place to develop this even further. The school recognizes, for example, that more emphasis needs to be placed on establishing aims for lessons that are clearly linked to what students are expected to learn. Across a range of activities, from the practical to the academic, students' motivation and enthusiasm are fired by the excitement in learning and respect for each other that is so well modelled by staff. As a result, attendance is high and is reinforced by a range of clearly understood systems. Parents value the very rapid response that results from the school monitoring patterns of student attendance.

**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 school places a very high priority on developing programs and staff. It has invested heavily in professional development. The school has secured considerable success in expanding its collation and interpretation of data, and in developing the ways in which teachers make use of this information at class level in planning an appropriate range of student work. Examples of this can be seen in the raising of teachers' confidence in using data to plan for students' different needs and in conferencing with students in order to assess their needs accurately.

The very high quality of staff discussion in formal and informal gatherings demonstrates the degree to which the school is committed to improvement. Staff are carefully selected

and developed in order to maximize opportunities for students. At the same time, the principal and assistant principals have very well-planned strategies for building their understanding of the effectiveness of instruction. Teachers value the information that they receive from both formal and informal observations, which are underpinned by regular walkthroughs. Very good use is made of observational materials that provide both a structure and a focus on expected practice. Consequently, observations are conducted against a background of shared understanding. The practice of assigning well-trained mentors to teachers who are new to the school or to the profession, enables staff to gain an understanding of practice and expectations in a short time.

Regular meetings between senior leaders focus on the information gathered from observations and the analysis of data, and in planning appropriate action. Staff collaboration is high and results in a good level of intervisitations with the aim of learning from each other. This level of professional respect and trust enables departmental meetings to be open and evaluative. Results are shared, as well as strategies for improvement. One aspect of the principal's excellent leadership, particularly referred to by teachers, parents and students, is her accessibility and the degree to which she knows students so well. As well as being exceptionally visible through the school, staff and students can and do seek her advice. She has taken the lead in building excellent relationships with the community so that the school has ready access to the range of services that it needs to support its students. The school runs smoothly because of the well understood systems that promote very clear communication and a thoroughly shared understanding of expectations.

**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.**

Using data from student assessments, complemented by information derived from observations and the range of focused discussion, the principal and senior staff have built a very good understanding of students' learning across the school, and within and across grades. There are significant strengths in the degree to which the school sets goals for student achievement and, through regular discussion and the analysis of interim data, undertakes modifications to individual or group programs should these be necessary. The school's good understanding of data is used well and, as a result, ensures that all groups make rapid progress. Although the school also has a good understanding of the progress that students ought to make, particularly in reading, writing and math, this is not yet used sufficiently in setting differentiated targets for individuals or groups that are related to their achievement at the start of the year.

The principal has built a strong team of senior managers who share her commitment to securing the best for students. Annual whole school planning and goal setting involves representatives of the whole school community and regular meetings focus well on what has been achieved, particularly in relation to the gains made by students. The school has moved rapidly in developing classroom practice, particularly in raising teachers' confidence in using data to plan for the varying needs of students. While planning identifies the strategies by which the school hopes to achieve these goals, the lack of interim goals or benchmarks leaves the school without an objective assessment of whether they are meeting their strategic objectives throughout the year.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Nathaniel Hawthorne Middle School</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				X	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .</b>	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	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .</b>	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	
<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?					X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				<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.**

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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				<b>X</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.**

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