



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Robert Fulton School

Public School 008

**37 Hicks Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal: Seth Phillips

Dates of review: February 7 – 8, 2007

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Robert Fulton School, PS 8, is located in the Brooklyn Heights section of Brooklyn and enrolls 427 students in grades pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The recipient of a federal magnet grant three years ago, the school is also known as the Magnet School for Exploration, Research and Design.

Recent statistics for this neighborhood school indicate that 44% of the students are Black, 38% White, 12% Hispanic and 6% Asian and other ethnicities. Special education students represent approximately 12% of the school population and 3% of the students are English language learners, mainly from Hispanic or French cultures.

The school receives Title 1 funding with 33% of the students currently eligible. This percentage is significantly lower than that of both similar schools and City-wide averages. It is indicative of the changing nature of the community. Student attendance, currently at 94%, is broadly the same as similar schools and close to the City-wide average.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The leadership of the principal, in both instructional and managerial roles, has transformed the school from a culture of failure and declining enrollment to one of growth and progress.
- The capacity of the instructional staff has been enhanced through extensive professional development.
- The school uses data to drive improvement efforts.
- The school is focused on teaching, learning, and continuous improvement.
- The extensive parental involvement in the school has built a strong sense of community and is a key element in the turnaround of the school.
- A federal magnet grant has enabled the school to redefine its mission and direction to a school-wide enrichment model that focuses on developing the gifts and talents of all students.
- The school has effectively used its Comprehensive School Reform grant and related resources to establish cultural partnerships that are linked to the curriculum.
- The school community is dedicated to developing the whole child.

What the school needs to improve

- Build the capacity to use assessment data more effectively to improve teaching and learning.
- Implement plans to improve the functioning and coordination of the school-based support and pupil personnel teams.
- Review the effectiveness and alignment of academic intervention services for struggling students.
- Continue to build the capacity of the school through shared leadership to sustain reform initiatives over the long term.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

The Robert Fulton School, PS 8, has turned around dramatically in the past four years. Previously, the school had fallen into disrepair, tests scores had plummeted and enrollment declined. With the leadership of a new principal and the infusion of abundant resources, the school has been transformed. The school is welcoming to visitors and parents. Teaching and learning are improving through an extensive staff development effort. Test scores are on the rise. Enrollment is increasing. A learning community that extends to the larger community is developing.

There is an energy and excitement about the school as consultants, artists, parent volunteers who staff the library, and many others, come each day to contribute to the life of the school. The school has secured a federal grant that has enabled them to become a magnet school focused on school-wide enrichment. Numerous cultural opportunities are available at each grade level. The school philosophy is centered on developing the whole child. Students are engaged in learning through a standards-based curriculum.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the school. There is much to celebrate.

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 student progress over time.

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

When the new principal arrived four years ago, the school was in corrective action. He clearly understood that his role was to turn the school around or it would close. As a result, the school does an excellent job of collecting data on all areas of interest. At first the major focus was on State and interim assessment data. With the school now in good standing, there is a more developmental focus in looking at such classroom data as running records, conferencing notes, and unit assessments in mathematics.

The school does an effective job of reviewing data on special populations such as English language learners, special education students, and ethnic groups, but prefers an approach that turns assessment results into better instruction for all students. Classroom teachers use data well to determine where students are and what needs to happen to move them to the next level. When data revealed a need to improve phonemic awareness, the school provided training to implement the Breakthrough to Literacy program in kindergarten through grade 3. Individual student data-based progress reporting is built into this program.

The school compares student performance closely with similar schools and across grades to evaluate its work. It is very well aware of its past performance and the quick rate of improvement in academic areas and in attendance, parental involvement and student

enrollment. Neighborhood families now choose to send their children to this school, reflecting a renewed confidence in its success and effectiveness.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

This school has embraced a creative and visionary approach for long-range improvement. Using a collaborative planning model and student data, the school community worked to secure two major grants that have enabled them to accelerate learning and to improve teaching practice. Federal grants have secured funding to enable the school to implement an enrichment model, to support professional development, to provide additional resources to reshape the early childhood literacy program and to bring in state of the art technology beginning at the kindergarten level. Timelines are in place for tracking improvement and achieving the consequent goals. The school leadership team keeps a close watch on improvement measures and develops challenging goals for the next year. They keep the pressure on to assure that there is academic rigor, especially in the upper grades.

Improvement plans are systemic and focus on the school as a whole. Highly effective kindergarten through grade 3 prevention programs are infused into the curriculum for children most in need of improvement in these grades. Students note that their teachers hold high expectations for them and encourage them to do better and get better. There is extra help available within the classroom day, after school and on Saturday for all students who need extra help with learning. When data collection revealed that more challenging learning experiences were needed, long term cluster-based projects and in depth units of study were introduced straightaway.

Where a few years ago only a handful of parents were involved, today the school has a very active and effective parent group that has a strong voice in driving improvement efforts. A very able parent coordinator has put in place effective programs that meet identified needs. Parents are fully involved in collecting data that will identify priority areas for school planning and actively fund raise to provide extra support for the school. Through their involvement, they know their children’s goals and support fully the school’s high expectations for their children’s success.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school is in the second year of implementing the New York City Children First curriculum initiatives. To implement the balanced literacy program effectively, the school has partnered with Columbia University’s Teachers College to provide extensive professional development. Teachers collect formative classroom data and use interim assessment reports that keep them apprised of the progress of each child.

Teachers note that they feel empowered to focus on the whole child. They recognize that they are accountable for improving student outcomes, but embrace the fact that they are

also responsible for contributing to the social and emotional growth of students as well. Teachers use data to group students and differentiate instruction appropriately to better meet children where they are in their learning. Improvements in the way data are used to differentiate instruction are ongoing and supported by teachers committed to doing the best for all students.

Teachers plan cultural experiences at each grade level that actively engage and enhance student learning. They have worked hard to assure these activities are linked closely to classroom learning. For example, the study of a picture by Picasso was turned into a writing prompt that students responded to in writer's workshop. Students are clearly delighted with the multitude of opportunities that enrich and expand their learning.

The principal has built his confidence in making effective budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions over the past four years. He has used substantial funding to resource the school with new furniture, equipment, supplies and books. Teachers appreciate the additional classroom resources available to them such as leveled book classroom libraries. Professional development funds, both to attend conferences and for training embedded within the school day, are focused on initiatives to improve student learning. The principal acknowledges that he has to make choices. He has a clear strategic view and he often bases decisions on goals he would like to accomplish two or three years from now.

Students indicate that their teachers go the extra mile for them. They know who to go to if there are problems. Children like that the principal meets once a week with students in grades 3 to 5 to discuss the 'issue of the day' and problem resolution strategies.

Over the past few years of implementing an effective plan to improve attendance, figures have moved from 90% to 94%.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around 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 has a clear idea and well developed list of attributes for selecting staff to continue to build the school's capacity. He chooses people who enjoy working with children and who are continuous learners who want to develop people. This type of staff thrives on the abundant professional development opportunities that are offered. Training for all faculty in the use of data to improve instruction is a commitment for the coming year.

Grant revenue has been channeled into professional development to build the skills of the teaching staff and to achieve identified goals. A particular focus has been on meeting the literacy needs of all students. As a result, teachers are now more adept at using interim assessment results to guide instruction. The principal is always thinking of the next step that must be taken to improve student learning. Consequently, the school has used funding strategically to nurture a community of learners and to expand their horizons in terms of cultural experiences planned at each grade level.

The principal frequently observes in classrooms to assess how well identified strategies have been implemented. This year there is a goal of engaging children in accountable talk to assure that they have mastered learning planned in each the lesson. Teachers note that he provides constructive feedback and targeted evaluative comments to improve

instruction. He also encourages teachers to visit other classrooms and builds opportunities to do so into the schedule.

Teachers meet regularly in grade level teams and engage in committee work to develop plans, discuss implementation, and review progress. As a result, they have established a collaborative culture and built a sense of community. They feel support and encouragement to take risks in their practice to excite students' learning further. The school continues to build the capacity of the school through shared leadership to sustain reform initiatives over the long term

All groups note the key role the principal has had in turning the school around. People view him as a person who cares about them and appreciates what they do. The school is well managed and now runs very smoothly with a principal who is visible and procedures that are clearly communicated.

Student support services include the pupil personnel team, the school-based support team and the academic intervention services coach. The goal to improve the functioning and collaboration of these providers to better service the needs of all students recognizes additional work required to improve the effectiveness in this aspect of the school's work. The school brings in many outside cultural institutions, such as the Guggenheim Museum and the Marquis Studio, to work with students and their teachers and to successfully expand their horizons and help achieve its goals.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

As he goes about his work, the principal believes he should "observe first, act secondly." Using this approach, the school has built effective structures to evaluate student progress. As data come into the school, teachers meet to discuss support services and the performance of students not meeting standards. Goals are developed in response to the data. For example, this year a need was seen and effectively addressed to improve comprehension skills on the listening portion of the English language arts assessment. The principal monitors closely the school's progress towards the achievement of this goal through the range of available assessment data.

The principal and school coordinators frequently scrutinizes the performance of students within and across classrooms to target areas in need of improvement. Plans are in place to train teachers how to use more targeted strategies for using assessment data to improve teaching and learning. In collaborative team teaching classrooms, the teachers plan lessons together and use multiple effective strategies to adjust programs and plans to reach goals that are stated in individualized education plans. These teachers are well attuned to the progress of their students and are able to intervene and change direction quickly when there are problems.

The school leadership team meets annually to review student achievement data and to set challenging goals for the school. Teachers meet in grade level teams and review progress proficiently. They meet with literacy coaches to adjust the program when needed. Teachers use conferencing strategies with their students to assess progress on a regular basis. They adjust the instructional level and differentiate instruction as needed.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Robert Fulton School (PS 008)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	