



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Samuel F. Dupont School**

**Public School 31**

**75 Meserole Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11222**

**Principal: Mary Scarlato**

**Dates of review: April 11 - 12, 2007**

**Reviewer: Chip Morrison**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 31, the Samuel F. Dupont School, currently serves 582 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Approximately 53% of students are Hispanic, 31% White, 11% Asian, and 5% Black. About 5% of students are identified as having special needs and 6% as English language learners. The most common home languages are Spanish and Polish. At 66%, the proportion of students registered as Title-I eligible is above the average for City schools. In 2005, average daily attendance was around 95%, somewhat above the average for both similar schools (94%) and City schools (93%) with these grade levels. Through March, 2007, attendance was averaging 97%.

The school is in its third year of funding as a Magnet School for the Arts and Humanities. In April 2006, Public School 31 was identified by the New York State Education Department as a High Performing, Gap Closing School.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has been successful in helping a large majority of students meet or exceed State standards in mathematics and English language arts for several years.
- The principal is a knowledgeable, highly experienced instructional leader who combines high expectations with friendly, trusting support for her staff.
- The school benefits from a highly collaborative, experienced leadership team, many of whom have given long service to the school.
- Teachers work well together, know clearly what is expected of them, and consistently deliver on these expectations.
- The school has created and maintained a positive school climate, with students who are consistently well-behaved and focused on successful learning.
- As a result of careful monitoring, peer support, and ongoing professional development, the quality of classroom instruction is high.
- The school's in-house mentoring program provides teachers in their first and second years with especially strong and systematic support.
- The school has done an especially good job of working with teachers to align curriculum, instruction, and interim assessments with state standards.
- The school offers an effective and varied program of academic services for struggling students.
- A rich variety of arts and other non-academic programs, offered both during and after school, significantly enriches the children's educational experience.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue developing the science curriculum, with a special focus on integration of mathematics and science.
- Continue to provide professional learning opportunities in differentiation, metacognition, and use of performance data to guide instruction.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

Public School 31 has a consistent record of academic excellence, going back for a period of more than twenty-five years. The school's academic performance is the result of a combination of factors including: close monitoring of instructional quality and pacing; consistent processes and procedures from one grade level to the next; well established systems for professional learning, careful alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment with State standards and, most importantly the careful use of data to set goals, shape instruction, and monitor interim progress on a regular basis.

### 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.**

Teachers and instructional leaders make exemplary use of data on student performance to understand student needs, tailor instruction to meet these needs, and monitor progress over time. In addition to data and reports from mandated assessments, the school uses its own internal interim assessments to plan instruction and monitor progress on sub-skills.

Instructional leaders are especially skillful at using online systems to generate customized reports that show progress for individual students, classrooms, grade levels, and subgroups of special interest, including ethnic groups, special education students, and English language learners. Customized reports from both interim and state assessments are provided to teachers who incorporate them into assessment binders with their own records of observations and of student performance on classroom assessments.

The school also monitors students in other categories of special interest; for example, the assistant principal has generated a full set of reports showing the performance of students who have been held back, and the services such students are currently receiving.

Instructional leaders use data to make useful comparisons, including comparisons with other schools, across subject areas, ethnic groups, grade levels and classrooms, and year-to-year comparisons of grade levels and age cohorts. As a result, they are able to evaluate the impact of changes to instructional programs, make changes as necessary, and hold individual teachers accountable for the progress of the students for whom they are responsible.

**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.**

As part of planning for the Comprehensive Education Plan, instructional leaders, working with the school leadership team, set challenging goals for annual progress at a school

level. In addition, instructional leaders set formal interim goals and monitor progress toward these goals on a monthly basis.

Working individually and in grade-level teams, classroom teachers use data from interim assessments to monitor progress toward annual goals for individual students and subgroups. As a result, teachers and leaders make mid-course adjustments to lesson plans, as well as ensure provision of services to students and groups of students who are at risk of failing to meet the school's high expectations.

The school pays particular attention to the needs of struggling students through a combination of push-in and pull-out academic services, small-group and individual tutoring, an after-school program, and a well-attended Saturday academy. As a result of these safety nets, the vast majority of students successfully meet standards.

The school has been successful in enlisting the support of parents as partners in their children's education. The school holds a curriculum conference in September, attended by 85%-90% of parents, during which classroom teachers explain year-end goals for students, how they intend to meet these goals and what will be expected of students. Parents must sign off on their children's homework assignments each day. If students fail to pass in assignments, teachers follow up with parents. In addition, the school provides a variety of workshops designed to help parents help their children. For example, at one workshop parents were asked to complete a practice test modeled on a State test, so they would have a better understanding of what is expected.

Taken together, these various strategies effectively focus the entire school community, including staff, students, and parents, on maintaining the school's reputation for academic excellence and successful mastery of challenging standards for all students.

**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 well developed.**

Over a number of years, school leaders have continuously refined academic programs based on available data, resulting in careful alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with State standards. Pacing charts in English language arts, mathematics, and social studies ensure consistent curriculum coverage across classrooms. Regular interim assessments help ensure that teachers have a good understanding of the impact of their instruction on student learning. The school also provides a broad set of enrichment activities, both during and after school, that help to further engage students and deepen their enjoyment of school. These include an especially strong and successful chess program, opportunities to work in the school bookstore, and ballroom dancing. The school is in the process of revamping its science curriculum to better integrate science with mathematics.

Teachers are held accountable, and hold each other accountable, for results. Teachers meet regularly in grade-level meetings to review student progress, plan instruction, and share problems and successes. Teachers are required to maintain assessments binders and these are monitored on a regular basis by instructional leaders. Instruction is carefully differentiated to the needs of students in a variety of ways, including flexible student grouping, customization of tasks, and push-in support from paraprofessionals and others. There is also a strong emphasis on tracking student reading levels, and ensuring that they read books at their appropriate level.

School leaders are especially skillful at managing the budget, schedule, and staffing in a way that tends to improve student outcomes, based on a careful analysis of needs. Examples include the use of funding to reduce class size in the upper grades, hiring of paraprofessionals, creation of special small, 12-student, classes for under-achieving students, and the establishment and ongoing maintenance of the school's peer mentoring program, which entails a careful balance of schedule and staffing.

Almost everyone in the building, including school aides, takes special care to know students on an individual basis and is especially vigilant in identifying students who may be experiencing social or emotional difficulties that may interfere with their learning. A full array of services, including counseling, is available for such students. Students trust adults in the building, and do not hesitate to ask for help when it is needed. As a result of careful monitoring, combined with successful efforts to ensure that students enjoy coming to school, average attendance at the school regularly exceeds 95%. Prolonged absences receive immediate attention.

**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.**

School leaders have been successful in hiring and retaining a committed group of teachers who care about children and share the school's vision for academic excellence. Teachers are trained, on the job, in the use of data to drive instruction, and this has been a special expertise in the school for many years.

The school's in-house professional development program is especially strong. The centerpiece is the peer mentoring program, which couples experienced teachers with new teachers during the first two years after hiring. New teachers are required to devote two preparation periods per week in the first year and one in the second year to this program. As a result, new teachers are inducted into the expectations, established structures and processes that have proven successful over the years. Faculty members report that this program has been essential in helping them learn how to teach effectively. Although these areas are already strengths, the school has identified needs for continuing professional development in data analysis, differentiation of instruction, and metacognition.

The principal and assistant principal are in classrooms on a daily basis. Teachers welcome this level of attention, as they feel both trusted and supported. Feedback is given in a sensitive way that further enhances trust and commitment to continuous improvement. Instructional leaders also arrange for teachers to visit each other's classrooms on a regular basis; typically teachers who are felt to need modeling in certain areas are matched with teachers who are judged to be strong, leading to enhanced professional learning.

Grade-level teams meet weekly to review the item-level results of interim assessments, plan instruction, adjust the curriculum, and share problems and successes. There is a high level of collaboration and informal sharing. Since most teachers are well established in the school they know each other well and have learned to work effectively in teams.

The principal is highly respected. She is widely admired by teachers and members of her cabinet, who describe her as "hard working," "supportive," "friendly," "trusting," "nurturing," and "proactive." Over her seven years as principal, has developed a solid track record of maintaining the school's hard-won reputation for academic excellence.

Students are taught expectations for behavior and academic performance in pre-kindergarten, and these expectations are reinforced consistently at every grade level, in every classroom. New teachers are carefully and systematically trained on instructional structures and processes from the beginning. As a result of this ongoing emphasis on consistency, the school runs especially smoothly.

The school has been successful in aligning support services with academic goals. In addition to the services provided for at-risk students described above the school has used funding from its magnet grant to forge partnerships with outside agencies, including Chess in the Schools, and the American Ballroom Dance Theater Company.

**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 well developed.**

The school regularly monitors progress toward annual targets defined in the Comprehensive Education Plan. The school makes good use of interim assessments in, English language arts and mathematics for example, to assess whether monthly goals for interim progress of individual students, classes, and grade levels have been met. In addition teachers are required to report the results of their own weekly assessments, and these reports are collected and carefully reviewed by the principal and assistant principal. The principal and assistant principal monitor progress by reviewing these reports, and also by direct observation of teaching and learning, including talking with students, during their daily classroom visits.

As a result of these well-established processes, instructional leaders have access to a continuously evolving picture of progress by individual students, classes and grade levels. This allows them to intervene when it appears that individuals or subgroups are at risk of failing to meet expectations and modify plans as necessary. Interventions can include provision of additional academic services for students or professional support for teachers.

This careful attention to progress on a weekly basis, which is a long-established part of the school culture, has contributed much to gains in the school's performance and the students' progress over many years.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Samuel F. Dupont School (PS 31)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X