



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Public School 77 Brooklyn**

**62 Park Place  
Brooklyn  
NY 11217**

**Principal: Merryl Redner-Cohen**

**Dates of review: February 12 – 13, 2007**

**Reviewer: Angela Cook**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 77 K is a District 75 school, and is located on seven sites. It serves students from 4.9 through 21 years old, who are diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum. There are 286 students enrolled, 56% of whom are Black, 19% Hispanic, 18% White, 5% Asian/Pacific Islands and 2% American Indian. Approximately 14% of the students are English language learners. More than 80% of the students are male. The school has a stable and experienced teaching team. Of the 44 classes, eight are inclusion classes ranging from kindergarten through high school, and these enable students to be fully included with their general education peers. Last academic year approximately 97% of the students took the New York State alternate assessments.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is a dedicated leader who guides her team by example and shares her vision of fostering life-long learning.
- The administrative cabinet drives school improvement and has high expectations for the academic, social and emotional development of each child.
- Students' progress is captured very effectively in digital images which are used to celebrate success.
- The curriculum is well tailored to meet the needs of students, and off-site work enables them to develop their skills and self-confidence in different environments.
- Carefully differentiated instruction enables all to experience success.
- Very good relationships between staff and students result in a calm learning environment.
- Students are engaged in age-appropriate activities which develop their work-related skills.
- Parents say they are made to feel welcome at school and their views are valued.
- The school uses professional development very effectively to develop a consistency of instruction and continuity in the curriculum across all its sites.
- Students say they enjoy being in school and they are given the opportunity to communicate their opinions.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to integrate the systematic analysis of data so that trends can be established over time and comparisons can be made which will facilitate the setting of goals to drive improvement.
- Strengthen teachers' understanding of data to enable all staff to effectively match instruction to the next stage of learning.
- Refine planning to ensure that it encompasses monitoring and evaluation of objectively measurable goals which are set within a clear timeframe.
- Develop with the teachers personal goals linked to the school's plans, and review these on an annual basis.
- Continue to develop opportunities for parents from the school to meet together so that they are well supported, and build more partnerships with them so that they can participate further in extending students' learning.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a proficient school with many well-developed features.**

Public School 77 K provides a safe learning environment in which each child can experience success. Although certain sub-criteria are judged to be proficient, the school's use of data is developing rapidly and a number of areas are close to becoming well developed. The school generates its own data, and uses this with a variety of standard-based assessments to confirm its strengths and analyze its weaknesses. Effective coordination across the different sites results in a consistency in instruction through the sharing of good practice. Related services staff provide valuable support by documenting progress and sharing new ideas. The cabinet provides a unified strong leadership capable of moving this school forward significantly in its use of data to support learning.

Good relationships between staff and students enable learning opportunities to be maximized. Students are happy in school and enjoy their work. In lessons they are well engaged and their eagerness to participate is a direct result of the careful way in which staff plan tasks for each individual. The curriculum is differentiated to meet the needs of every child, so that each can experience success and each is encouraged to develop a love for learning. Parents say they feel they are welcome when they visit the school and they appreciate the new partnership initiatives being developed.

### 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 proficient.**

The school effectively gathers much data from which to build an understanding of each student's performance and progress. Brigance assessment is conducted in the fall term, creating a base-line, and is then repeated again at the end of the academic year to show progress over the year. Newly purchased curriculum programs generate data for each child, and classroom work, saved in students' files, indicates progress made. In classrooms teachers conduct on-going assessments using very carefully focused objectives based on individual education programs. Goals relate not only to academic subjects but also to social interaction, job skills, communication and managing behavior. Standard-based tasks are broken down into very small achievable steps where each individual's skills, knowledge and understanding can be assessed. For example, in one class where students were practicing work-based skills such as laminating and paper shredding, the teacher had analyzed each task so that she could determine at what stage in an activity the individual child needed help, and what level of assistance was required. She also involved the students in assessing their own progress and registering whether or not they had enjoyed the task.

Class progress is monitored by analyzing class data and by regular classroom observation. The senior team has clarity of vision and uses a wide range of data carefully

to monitor progress across the different sites. The school is developing a systematic approach to gathering and using data. While encouraging staff to have ownership of their data, it recognizes that there is a need for rigor. Outcomes of data-related initiatives put in place earlier this academic year are still being evaluated. The database is not yet sufficiently large to provide meaningful comparisons, patterns, or trends.

**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 proficient with some well-developed features.**

The cabinet is focused on extending the use of data to improve their school further, for example by greater analysis to inform planning and to set goals. The senior leadership team, in conjunction with staff, has developed the school’s annual goals, which are seen merely as a step towards achieving the long term aims of the school. Individual education programs provide annual goals at student level, and these are broken down into three short term objectives. Using these objectives classroom teachers construct subject-related targets which are linked to the New York State alternate assessments. The school is aware that not all of these goals are objectively measurable, and not all are yet set within a clear timeframe.

Related service providers are also involved in assessing individuals and setting their goals. Teachers incorporate this information into their planning of classroom activities so that all aspects of the child’s development are considered. Every child is individually considered. High on the school’s list of priorities is the promotion of social skills and the development of independence. Learning good manners by waiting for others and taking turns is a part of classroom practice which is tailored to the individual’s needs. For example, some children during a group activity are able to manage turn taking by themselves, whereas others need individual support and the use of visual clues to indicate the sequence of events. Teachers are engaged in monitoring progress, which is then used to inform the planning of the next stage of learning. The school is seeking ways in which to increase paraprofessionals’ involvement in the process. An inconsistency in the manner in which data is used to capture progress and is used to set the next goals is recognized and is being addressed.

The school’s high expectations are promoted in a variety of ways, including parent evenings and school activities such as the ‘Motown Show.’ Report cards are regularly sent home informing parents of their child’s progress. Annual reviews of individual education programs also provide the opportunity to set challenging goals for each student. Pictures are used to communicate with non-verbal students. The school recognizes the need to increase the number of parents working in close partnership with them in order to support the performance and progress of their children, both in school and at home.

**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.**

This is a strength of the school. Teachers effectively adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the individual, and break down each stage into small measurable steps so that all progress can be recognized. Students have a varied curriculum aligned to the New York

State alternate assessments, and are able to develop work-related skills within the familiar school setting. Older students are supported by the school in work placements, where carefully planned programs enable them to learn and practice new skills. The school regards the curriculum as a working document which is reviewed and continually amended to meet all needs. Students in inclusion classes are well supported, and staff work hard to develop further opportunities for integration.

Teachers are adept at creating a stepped approach to improvement. Differentiating tasks for each child in a class enables them to develop learning at their own rate, and all to experience success. There is a clear, but informal, structure in place which holds all staff accountable. Teachers take ownership of the learning in their classes. Working in teams with the school-based coach, they discuss strategies, share good practice and plan the next steps. Technology is used to prepare picture exchange systems for non-verbal students, and it provides tailor-made programs to meet each individual's needs. Related services provide highly valued input, and paraprofessionals work closely with teachers to extend learning.

Budgeting decisions are focused on students' needs. For example, the appointment of a coach specializing in autism demonstrates the school's determination to provide a high quality instruction across the whole school. Developing a school-wide approach also helps to reduce any trauma students may feel at transition, when they move sites. Data is used to inform planning within the classroom, and scheduling is devised to support the plans. Lessons are age-appropriate and engage students. For example, grade 4 students used a modified copy of the National Geographical magazine as a basis for their study of famous Americans, and this provided stimulating material. Relationships between students and staff are good, and students say that there is someone they can approach when anything troubles them. Parents of non-verbal students say their children are happy to come to school, and were there anything troubling them they, as parents, would know immediately. Strategies put in place to support attendance are effective, as is shown by the good attendance rate. Data is used to monitor trends and an attendance committee, with representatives from all the sites, meets to resolve any difficulties. Attendance in the last academic year was 89%.

**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 built a strong staff team who are able to make positive and significant contributions to the school. The senior team shares the principal's vision, and the cabinet speaks with a unified voice. Recently initiated systems for gathering and using data have provided a baseline of information from which the school can develop plans for improvement based on evidence of progress in the classrooms.

Professional development is seen as a high priority and staff turn-key their learning. Using observations from his work in school, a speech therapist enthusiastically led a session on writing, in which staff were able to explore new ideas and ultimately decide to pilot the new program themselves. The coach has a unifying role across the different sites, providing professional support for staff through modeling good practice, co-teaching and identifying areas for whole school development.

The cabinet is engaged in visiting classrooms and providing both verbal and written feedback for the staff. Timetabled inter-visitations provide further opportunities to share

good practice. Although some staff have annual goals which are linked to the Comprehensive Education Plan, this is not yet consistent practice for all, and not all staff have personal strategies to improve the quality of their instruction.

Staff work effectively together in site-based teams, using common preparation time to develop the next learning steps and to review students' progress. Much reflection and evaluation ensure that staff are able to match their planning to students needs. The coach ensures consistency across the sites. The principal is highly respected and, supported by her well-established team, has the capacity to move this school forward. She and her staff deftly overcome any difficulties in accommodation, always seeking to provide the best learning environment for the students. Occasionally a tension arises over the space shared with the other school. The school functions well through the clear management structure and all aspects are closely monitored. Close working with outside organizations, for example at Long Island University, extends learning opportunities for students. The career path program allows students to develop engineering maintenance and good culinary skills.

**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 with well-developed features.**

The school has successfully begun to develop its use of data to support learning. Data collection in the classroom is well established and is used to provide details of progress at different levels across the school. Not all plans, however, contain objectively measurable goals set within a clear timeframe, and therefore it is not always possible to determine the effectiveness of the plan or intervention. The school recognizes that, as the data system was only initiated at the beginning of the school year, the full impact of the aggregation of data to enable comparative analysis has still to be seen. However, the system is already revealing useful initial comparisons, but there is insufficient data as yet to provide a sound basis for planning.

Staff continually monitor and evaluate their strategies and data provides validation for their judgments. A recent reading scheme was deemed by teachers to be too phonetically based. The related plans were quickly reviewed and resources were altered to match the visual learning styles of the students. The coach moderates planning across the school and so maintains an effective overview. Careful analysis of formal assessment data provides areas for development, which are shared with staff in a timely manner to ensure that outcomes improve.

The cabinet views the Comprehensive Education Plan as a step in the long term planning for the school. It is a working document that informs decision-making, and is used to set goals that will support the fulfillment of the school's mission statement, namely, to foster life-long learners.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Public School 77K</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<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>			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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<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.		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<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>	Ø	✓	+
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>	Ø	✓	+
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>	Ø	✓	+
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	