



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Thaddeus Stevens School**

**Public School 081**

**990 Dekalb Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11221**

**Principal: Cheryl Ault**

**Dates of review: April 30 – May 01, 2007**

**Reviewer: Bruce Berry**

# Content of the report

## **Part 1: The School Context**

Information about the school

## **Part 2: Overview**

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

## **Part 3: Main Findings**

Overall evaluation

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

## **Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Thaddeus Stevens School has 451 students enrolled from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The ethnic breakdown of students is 74% Black, 24% Hispanic, 1% White and 1% Asian. There are 8% special education students and 6% English language learners.

The school has 86% Title I eligible students. The attendance rate of students is 87.8% which is lower than similar or City schools.

As an Empowerment School, it has more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment Schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal's good leadership and management are creating a culture of continuous improvement in the school.
- The cabinet and the teachers are a united team that share and develop plans and goals to achieve the continuous school improvement vision.
- The school has very effective systems for the use of periodic data which is having a positive impact on raising achievement.
- Instruction programs provide engagement and interest for the students.
- There are very effective procedures for servicing the needs of special education students and English language learners.
- There are good intervention programs in place to provide support for students in greatest need of improvement.
- There is a caring and respectful family culture in the school and students enjoy learning.
- Parents have high praise for the good education and care given to their children.
- The school has effective attendance practices in place.
- Student motivation is increased by the school's celebrations and rewards for successes they achieve.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further develop interim goal setting for individual students and classrooms.
- Continue to develop instruction and differentiation to provide appropriate challenge for the higher achieving students.
- Provide professional development in the use of data to ensure that continuous growth in student progress is maintained.
- Refine processes to ensure consistency in the monitoring and evaluation of progress in achieving interim plans and goals.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The principal's good leadership and management are creating a culture of continuous improvement in Thaddeus Stevens School. The principal has a clear view of the challenges facing the school in promoting higher levels of achievement for the students. The school has made gains in achievement, particularly for the students moving to middle school in 2006. There is a caring and respectful family culture in the school and the principal and teachers work hard in creating a community where students enjoy learning.

As an Empowerment school, periodic data is used well to track the performance of students in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects. The school has a highly developed data system which accurately tracks monthly progress of students. Progress is tracked against specific skill strands within each subject area, enabling teachers to closely target instruction at identified areas in need of improvement. The school is not, as yet, setting interim goals for students and classrooms. Instructional practice engages students and provides appropriate challenge for the majority of them. There is some inconsistency in differentiation of instruction to ensure that high performing students are suitably challenged. The school provides a wide range of activities to give students enrichment in supporting their academic and social well being.

### 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.**

The school has very effective systems for the use of periodic data which is having a positive impact on raising achievement. The periodic data is updated and collected centrally each month using a data base system which provides a complete overview of the progress of each student, classroom and grade. Mastery of specific skill strands are recorded in reading, writing and mathematics, together with progress in reading levels and performance in Princeton tests. This wealth of data gives a complete record of progress and is used to identify areas in need of further development for each student and groups of students. There are effective procedures for servicing the needs of special education students and English language learners. There are three special education classes where students receive the full curriculum, but with modifications to take account of the specific goals in their individual education plan. The individual education plan teacher, the principal and the school psychologist meet regularly to review progress in meeting these specified goals. English language learners are taught in general education classes, but receive push-in and pull-out support from a specialist teacher. Students also attend after school and Saturday programs and some students have a program in their home. The school also runs English programs for Spanish and Chinese speaking parents. The performance of ethnic groups is tracked closely through the school's sophisticated progress tracking processes.

High performing students are tracked to ensure they maintain appropriate performance levels. They have a Saturday acceleration program which includes high level computer skills-based learning and have the opportunity of participating in a science and technology summer program. However, the use of differentiation to address the needs of the high performing students is inconsistent at classroom level.

A number of students are in shelters and their progress and welfare are very well supported by the guidance counselor, who works with external services to provide support for the students and their families. Comparisons are made with similar schools and the growth in test results over three years for the 2006 cohort has seen the school exceed those of City schools. The data-based tracking allows the school to measure progress of each student, classroom and grade and plan interventions as appropriate.

**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.**

Plans and goals, as defined in the principal’s review, are appropriate for achieving continuous improvement in the school. They focus on improvement in instructional practice, improving differentiation and using data to improve achievement. There are suitable measurable goals in respect of growth in the number of students achieving threes and fours in the State tests and a reduction in students at test level one. The goals and plans have a focus on growth in respect of achievement of individual students, classrooms, grades and the whole school. There are good intervention programs in place to provide support for students in greatest need of improvement. The school uses a wide range of strategies to improve reading levels including Reading Plus, Reading First, Read 180 and Wilson, which are all targeted at students in need of intervention at different stages of progress in their reading. Teacher tracking of progress in all curriculum areas together with the use of the outcomes of data are used to plan all interventions as appropriate. Academic intervention services are used in the morning and after school to provide support for students identified as in need of their services.

Parents have high praise for the good education and care given to their children. High expectations play a major role in the motivation of all members of the school community to raise achievement in the school. Parent volunteers play a role as learning leaders in order to help students with their reading. Parents are invited to visit and take part in any lessons each Thursday morning and are able to join teachers in “tea and talk” and “lunch and learn” sessions. There is a monthly newsletter to parents to keep them updated on the curriculum for their children over the next month. Parents also receive a regular update of progress through the record card, parent and teacher conferences and are able to talk to teachers at any time about any academic or social issue. The principal, cabinet, teachers, students and parents at the school are driven by the school improvement vision. The use of the very good data base system for analyzing the outcomes of periodic assessments provides a clear picture of progress and allows for early intervention to be targeted at identified 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 proficient.**

The school follows the mandated curriculum and uses the Teachers College workshop model in English language arts and the Everyday Mathematics scheme. Science is taught through the content areas and follows the State standards. The school is trialing the Mind Institute mathematics program in grades 2 and 4 which links mathematics and music, and good growth in achievement levels is being experienced as a result of the program. Teachers are held accountable for improving instruction through the monitoring of the outcomes of data, formal and informal lesson observations and through the principal and coaches collecting work samples to check the quality against the assessment outcomes. However, differentiation of instruction and learning activities is inconsistent and does not always provide appropriate challenge for the higher achieving students.

Budget, staffing and scheduling decisions are influenced by the outcomes of data and student achievement needs. In the present academic year the school has initiated a reading club and the Mathematics Mind Institute program. Resources are also targeted at providing common planning time across the grades for teachers. Future plans include an increase in information technology applications available for teachers to integrate in their instruction. Instruction programs provide good engagement and interest for the students. Instruction is well structured and planned, providing pace and generating interest for the students. There is good evidence of differentiation in reading, but there is inconsistency in differentiation practice in other instructional activities. There is a caring and respectful family culture in the school and students enjoy learning. Students are able to approach the principal and any teacher for support and guidance at any time and about any issue. The school has effective attendance practices in place. Parents are called immediately if a student is absent and the principal and volunteer parents visit homes where attendance issues are identified. An attendance committee and the attendance teacher meet regularly to review student attendance and the progress being made with identified long term absentees.

**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.**

There are very good procedures for the selection of new staff. An appointments committee considers candidates’ suitability through an interview which considers their willingness to learn, their organization, knowledge of use of data to track student progress and their ability to be a good team member. Professional development requirements are appropriately planned based on the identified needs from the outcomes of data, together with a survey of professional needs identified by teachers. Teachers attend Teachers College and regional workshops and are supported in school by coaches in mathematics and reading. The principal recognizes the need to provide professional development in the use of data to ensure that continuous growth in student progress is maintained. The principal undertakes formal and informal classroom observations. The activity is very well supported by the coaches who follow up on any identified issues. Feedback is always provided and is used well by teachers to improve instructional practice. Teachers have the opportunity of visiting one another’s classrooms and share good practice.

The cabinet and the teachers are a united team that works very effectively in sharing and developing plans and goals to achieve the continuous school improvement vision. Teachers meet at grade conferences to reflect on instruction, curriculum, the outcomes of data and their impact on student progress. Grade team leaders meet with the principal and assistant principal to consider issues and initiatives relevant to the instruction and curriculum for each grade. The principal is well respected by all members of the school community. Her ability to effect change has galvanized the school community to focus successfully on school improvement, which has resulted in improved achievement levels. The school is a caring and well ordered organization. Procedures are very clear and followed carefully and there is a very respectful and calm atmosphere in the school. Student motivation is increased significantly by the school's celebrations and rewards for successes they achieve. A range of partnerships provide very good opportunities for students to experience high quality enrichment activities including chess, arts, chorus, dance, scouts and several sporting activities.

**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.**

The school has appropriate plans and goals for raising achievement of students. Monthly monitoring of student progress is undertaken using the school's own sophisticated periodic data system which checks strand progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has appropriate whole school goals, but has not yet developed interim goal setting for individual students and classrooms.

The school uses the monthly outcomes of the analysis of periodic data well to review plans and goals and plan curriculum, instruction and intervention modifications based on the data outcomes. The school planning process effectively engages the cabinet and teachers in a collaborative approach in producing plans and goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan. Plans and goals focus on continuous school improvement for the year ahead. There is an effective cycle of planning, review at monthly intervals and modification of plans and goals based on the outcomes of data. It is recognized by the principal that the school needs to create more refined processes to ensure consistency in the monitoring and evaluation of progress in achieving interim plans and goals.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Thaddeus Stevens School (PS 081)</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>	∅	✓	+
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	