



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Silas B. Dutcher School

Public School 124

**515 4th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11215**

Principal: Annabelle Martinez

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Reviewer: Diane T Kay

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Silas B. Dutcher School has a stable enrollment of 348 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Seventy-five percent of the students are Hispanic, a much higher proportion than is typically found in City and similar schools. The remainder of the student population is comprised of 9% Black students, 8% White, 8% Asian and other ethnic groups. Eighty six percent of students are Title 1 eligible. Approximately 11% of the students are English language learners. The percentage of special education students increased from 3% to 7% in September, 2006, when a self-contained 12:1:1 kindergarten class was opened. The school's attendance rate is approximately 95% and compares favorably to both City and similar schools.

The principal was assigned to the school in September 2005. An assistant principal position was added to the staff organization in September 2006. Together, the principal and new assistant principal form the new supervisory team.

The school is overcrowded and operates at over 100% utilization of its building.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is committed to improving instruction, the curriculum and the use of data to improve student outcomes.
- The principal is analyzing data in order to make comparisons between students, classes and grades.
- The curriculum has been expanded to include data-driven changes, for example, the introduction of writing workshops.
- A menu of interventions is available that supports students in need of improvement.
- The strong science program yields excellent results and provides successful examples of motivating and engaging lessons.
- Students learn in a caring, supportive environment where staff are concerned about students and their families.
- Good attendance is emphasized and rigorous procedures are in place to address students with low attendance.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that classroom observations are completed for all teachers and that feedback identifies strengths and areas in need of improvement.
- Ensure that all teachers routinely record assessment data for all students and comply with procedures established by the school.
- Ensure that all members of staff analyze and apply data as the basis of planning instruction for all students.
- Include interim assessments in all plans and use these to monitor progress.
- Regularly review and revise plans to ensure that goals are being addressed, monitored and achieved.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

This is warm, friendly neighborhood school. The staff are committed to students' social and emotional development as well as their academic growth.

The principal was appointed to the school in September 2005. She has been successful in establishing a growing culture of data-driven instruction. Teachers have restructured their lessons effectively to allow for small group and individual instruction. The principal has increased support in line with her expectations and provides the resources the teachers need to achieve success. Opportunities for professional development have increased and are well focused on improving the curriculum and developing the use of interim assessments. Continuous and consistent monitoring and revision of school goals and plans are not yet in place, but the school has the capacity to improve in this area.

The parents are happy to send their children to the school which they describe as safe and well run. They feel welcome in the building and find that the school offers them a variety of options for making a positive difference in the educational lives of their children.

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 collects a range of informal and standardized assessment data to document student achievement. The principal manually reorganized 2006 State English language arts and mathematics results according to last year's class organization so that teachers could reflect on past practices. Additionally, they were given results for their current students, and this data is used to group students for differentiated instruction. A successful system for completing running records on lower-achieving students, including lower-achieving English language learners and special education students, was adopted in the autumn and expanded to include all students later this school year. Teachers are expected to collect and record data for all students daily during one on one conferences and small group instruction. This is still a growing practice and is not yet consistently implemented by all teachers.

Comparisons across grades, classrooms and students give the school a picture of its strengths and needs. The principal undertook a comparative study of student performance from grade 3 in 2004 to grade 5 in 2006 that revealed a drop in performance in grade 5. It has led to a new focus on the instruction of high-achieving students. The principal and assistant principal also regularly collect student writing samples in order to assess writing progress and make comparisons across classrooms and grades. The insights gained during these reviews drive professional development decisions and give the school a broad view of the progress of students across classes, grades and the school.

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.

The School Leadership Team successfully collaborates to produce the Comprehensive Education Plan which clearly defines the school’s main goals for the year, based on the analysis of assessment data. Priority goals identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan, such as the development of a writing curriculum, focus the efforts of the school community. A drop in the State English language arts exam scores reported in the fall of this year further validated the school’s commitment to organize for improvement in this area. Teachers meet regularly during common preparation periods and voluntarily during ‘Lunchtime Pow Wows’ to review school-wide curricular goals, plan lessons together and review student outcomes in writing and other subject areas.

The school is attentive to its students in greatest need of improvement and uses data-driven programs to instruct and assess their progress. A “Sunrise Program” operates four days weekly. Teachers work with their students most in need of improvement, including English language learners and special education students, to provide appropriate interventions that have resulted in improved performance. Progress is assessed via running reading records and is charted over time. The menu of available academic interventions is growing and, in addition to the “Sunrise Program,” includes a Saturday Academy for grades 3 through 5, Reading Recovery and Wilson Reading. Data from these programs shows they are effective in raising students’ reading achievement.

Students and their parents agree that the principal and staff have high expectations for them and ‘push’ students to achieve their personal best. Parents feel welcome at the school and see the informal conversations and written notes they receive from teachers to be as valuable as the formal progress reports they receive. Parents cite a number of ways the school utilizes to help them support and improve their children’s learning, such as curricular Family Nights and the school’s volunteer Learning Leaders Program.

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’s curriculum is well rounded and aligns well with the mandated requirements. The school has worked diligently to improve its literacy curriculum which now includes the capacity to generate interim data on the progress of individual students. Students learn science in a well-stocked science room where they construct meaning through scientific inquiry. A strong visual arts program is supported by the school’s partnership with Arts Connection and is evidenced by the creative student artwork that fills the halls of the building.

Teachers are held accountable for student outcomes during common preparation periods, grade meetings, and faculty conferences where they collaboratively examine the curriculum, instruction, student work and assessments. Interim data is collected through conferences and small group instruction and maintained in literacy conference logs. The logs are used by teachers to plan mini-lessons and to provide targeted interventions that

support student improvement. However, consistent use of these logs by all teachers has not yet been achieved.

Budgetary, staffing and scheduling decisions are aligned with data-driven goals. For example, following a drop in English language arts scores, a part-time intervention teacher was hired to provide differentiated instruction to students most in need of improvement in literacy. Kaplan test sophistication materials were also purchased as part of the plan to improve students' performance in English language arts. Common preparation periods are a scheduling priority that afford teachers, coaches and supervisors the time to collegially plan and assess results.

Students are actively engaged in most classrooms. Students work independently and can articulate the purpose of the task at hand. Strategies that promote the active engagement of all students, such as 'turn and talk', are replacing more traditional and limiting discussion structures like hand raising.

The school has been successful in establishing a nurturing environment for students. Meetings with administrators, teachers, parents and students reflect mutual respect and a striking sense of personalization. Students readily name staff members who can help them with academic and social concerns. Parents cite the supportive and caring staff as the school's greatest asset. This fact, along with a thoughtful and consistently implemented attendance plan, ensures that attendance at this school continues to surpass that of similar schools

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 proficient.

Staff turnover at the school is minimal, and the current principal has had limited opportunities to hire new staff. To ensure that newly selected staff share the school's values, the hiring process replicates the formal process established by the City to hire supervisory staff and includes interviews by a committee of school stakeholders.

Teachers at this school report that meaningful professional development opportunities, especially school-based opportunities, have increased under the leadership of the current principal. Student writing is increasingly being used to assess professional development needs in literacy. This targeted professional development has resulted in improved student performance in a variety of writing genres. The full-time mathematics coach offers a range of support around the school's goals for mathematics that includes teacher feedback, demonstration lessons and differentiated support for new and experienced teachers. The principal is consciously working to increase collaboration and professional discussion among staff members. She regularly distributes pertinent articles and is committed to increasing the school's inventory of professional books to spark the thinking of the staff and create a common language and vision.

Although the principal and assistant principal are described by the community as visible and accessible, some teachers have not yet received observation reports. Additionally, the reports that are written do not consistently reflect the goals of the school or monitor established school procedures, like data recording. The principal understands the importance of observing all teachers in a timely manner and giving them formal, written reports with supportive feedback. However, she has not yet developed a plan that ensures

that this happens. Staff members report that they visit the classrooms of colleagues to observe specific learning strategies. This is a growing practice at the school and is reported to be successful in improving student outcomes.

The principal is respected by the school community. She is viewed as friendly and open to suggestions. She modeled the open collaboration she is striving to achieve by asking the staff for feedback regarding her strengths and areas in need of improvement at the end of last year. The school runs smoothly and the tone of the school is calm. Procedures for every day functioning and emergency situations are in place.

Support services are aligned with the overall school plan. The school has a part-time guidance counselor and a part-time speech teacher who are active members of the pupil personnel team and work to provide interventions that result in improved student performance. Several partnerships with outside organizations help the school achieve its goals. For example, the school's writing consultant has been instrumental in helping to develop the writing curriculum by providing ongoing professional development to the staff.

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 undeveloped.

The school has not yet developed any systems to promote ongoing adjustment of plans and goals. The Comprehensive Education Plan and other school plans are not viewed by the staff as working documents in need of constant monitoring and revision. June planning is cited as the time when such revisions are made. However, this is a yearly event and does not provide for the constant adjustments in practice that ensure that all students are receiving targeted assistance that is improving their academic achievement.

Although this aspect of the school's work is undeveloped, recent changes in curriculum and practice demonstrate a capacity for improvement and growth. For example, the school's Comprehensive Education Plan describes the development of writing portfolios that track and document student growth and are monitored three times each year. However, the monitoring is not purposeful since the school has not fully developed the interim assessments and benchmarks of progress that provide for objective and systematic evaluation of growth in writing. The school has made good progress in comparing student writing during collaborative professional development sessions and now recognizes the need to develop and use ongoing assessments to evaluate progress towards goals and define next steps. Additionally, recent changes to the school's assessment of reading progress have led to a greater understanding of the need to transfer this practice to other subject areas.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Silas B. Dutcher School (PS 124)	∅	✓	+
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		