



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Public School 134  
4001 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11218**

**Principal: Beverly Lynch**

**Dates of review: 3 – 4 October, 2006**

**Reviewer: Alan Kaye**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

This is an elementary school with 425 students from kindergarten through 5th grade. The school community serves students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Just over half of the students are Black and there is a substantial minority of Hispanic students. There are also some Asian and White students. Almost 11% are special education students and 14% are English language learners, with a variety of home languages. Ninety three percent of the students are eligible for Title 1 funding. Attendance rates are above the City average.

It is not a neighborhood school and most students reside in the Flatbush area of Brooklyn and are bused to school from 12 locations. The school building is over 100 years old and set in an urban area with limited space. It comprises two separate buildings which share a common yard. It is very well resourced. The students benefit from numerous partnerships and projects in which the school is engaged, including ones with Teachers' College, Columbia University, the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens and with other schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal, ably assisted by the assistant principal, is especially hard working, leads the school with energy and commitment and demands and receives high standards.
- All staff plan and work collaboratively, and have a high level of personal commitment to the principal, school and students.
- A rich range of professional development opportunities, including workshops and a varied program of visits to other schools is made available to staff.
- The school collects, analyzes and interprets a full range of data at student, class, grade and school levels, and uses this data well to align and adjust its instructional approaches.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced with a solid emphasis on English language arts and mathematics, and is enriched by the involvement and contribution of outside agencies and bodies.
- Students enjoy learning and respond well to their teachers. They are enthusiastic, polite, considerate and well behaved, showing respect to each other and to adults.
- A very good range of student support is available in the school, with timely, well-judged and effective interventions.
- The school uses its financial resources wisely to improve the quality of instruction: it is well staffed and enjoys good access to resources.
- The supportive learning environment raises student aspirations and encourages all to do their best.

### What the school needs to improve

- Spread the existing good practice in formative assessment throughout the curriculum.
- Prepare a summary of the Comprehensive Education Plan, identifying the goals, associated objectives, and key action points, make this summary available to all staff and use it as a working document to track progress.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal leads the school with energy and commitment and believes that all children can and should learn. The administration and faculty all share this vision and work collaboratively to achieve it, obtaining impressive results. The curriculum is broad and balanced and children respond to the instruction with enthusiasm. There is a relentless focus on standards of achievement. The achievement of male students in English language arts is particularly noteworthy. A broad range of student support is available from the academic intervention services and pupil support teams. Interventions are timely, well judged and effective.

The school collects, analyzes and interprets a full range of data at student, class, grade and school levels and uses this data to align and adjust its instructional approaches. There is a very active professional development committee and a rich range of professional development opportunities available to staff. These include workshops on particular topics and themes as well as a varied program of visits to other schools. The school's involvement in the Teachers College, Columbia University Writing Project has been particularly fruitful.

### **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 overall.**

The school reviews and monitors results in standardized test scores as well as its own assessments. Scores on State and City assessments and tests have risen dramatically in recent years. They now significantly exceed both State and City norms as well as those for similar schools. Improvement has occurred in all content areas, for all ethnic groups and for males and females. The school has analyzed its data for the past five years on the basis of ethnicity and found that Black students represent the majority in the gifted program.

In addition to using the State and City test scores, the school generates its own data, and uses it to plan deployment of resources and to target its interventions. It maintains qualitative and quantitative data at both individual, class and grade level. Kindergarten classes employ a checklist of key concepts in mathematics which are graded as 'beginning', 'developing' and 'secure'. Similar procedures are used for science.

Each grade team has developed its own benchmark assessments which are used in the first two weeks of the school year. Every child has a record card used from kindergarten through grade 5 which details their progress in English language arts and mathematics, together with a record of any interventions made. In social studies, technology and physical education there are also individual student records which clearly show what work each child has covered and mastered. As a result, teachers have a clear idea of how well their students are doing.

The school gathers other data in order to examine its practice. For example, as a result of lesson observations and a staff survey, the professional development committee has planned a workshop on 'Conferencing about Individual Children'.

**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.**

There is a relentless demand to raise achievement levels, regardless of any social issues or contexts, so that all students get the best possible start. The principal has a firm belief that data is useful only to the degree it is used to improve teaching and learning. The school has an annual assessment calendar and data is collected over varied time frames. It gathers data systematically in all the key areas which affect student achievement and thus has a very complete view of each child, class and grade in the school. Data gathering and goal setting are embedded into the day to day routines of the school.

The planning of goals for students in greatest need is well developed and documented. As a consequence, few need a personal improvement plan. Students are identified as in need of intervention by either the results of standardized test scores or teacher referral. Once referred, students are assessed so that their needs can be better understood and a program of remediation is developed. Regular and routine discussions about the child are held by a range of teams to track and evaluate the progress of all students receiving intervention. Parents are also fully involved.

A full-time parent coordinator works successfully to increase parental involvement. Parent-teacher conferences are well attended with translators on hand to assist. A valuable program of parent workshops is held each year on a variety of relevant topics. A full and informative parents' handbook is produced and as far as possible, materials sent home are produced in the home languages of the students in the school.

Classrooms have assessment rubrics prominently displayed for the key subjects so that the students may be better informed about what they need to do to improve. Students are increasingly involved in the assessment of their own progress. In all grades a writing checklist is used which requires students to record 'Things I can do' and 'Things I need to work on'. This is exemplary.

**Quality Statement 3 – Build and Align Capacity: 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.**

The curriculum is under constant review, based on the use of data. For example, a recent review of the science curriculum has led to the replacement of the existing program with a new commercial program. Each grade has an 'Eagle' class of more talented or gifted students who follow a curriculum enriched with additional units of work designed to promote critical thinking. The other classes in each grade are heterogeneous, although

one of the classes in each grade has collaborative team teaching for much of the time and contains all the special education students taught in an inclusive setting.

The school's budget and resources are used effectively by students and teachers to improve instruction. Specialist teachers teach a range of subjects for different age groups. The principal believes that small class sizes are a priority to raise standards and so has decided to employ additional teachers and extra guidance counseling. Classrooms have the feel of workshops for learners, with rubrics and key points to assist learning prominently displayed.

As a result of high-quality instruction, students enjoy learning and respond very well to their teachers. They are enthusiastic, polite, considerate and very well behaved showing respect to each other and to adults. The attendance rate, currently 95%, now exceeds both City and averages for similar schools. The principal monitors student absences daily and the guidance counselor and attendance teacher work together with children and their families. A particular issue is the practice of some parents to take their children on extended visits to their country of origin while school is in session. The school does everything it can to eliminate this practice.

**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 is well respected, hardworking and committed to the school and its development. She leads by example and has high expectations, which all staff share. She is determined that all the students in her care maximize their potential and has brought about a remarkable transformation since she opened the school in 1999. She has a strong strategic sense of what needs to be done to improve it even further and has the ability to bring this about. She is ably assisted by the assistant principal and together they form a close-knit and effective team. Management systems work smoothly. Teachers give generously of their time, work well together and have high expectations of themselves and each other. They know they are accountable but also know that they are well supported to succeed.

The very active professional development team analyzes performance data, surveys teachers to ascertain need, and organizes professional development in a range of subjects and identified areas of activity. Good support is offered to new teachers, who are encouraged to ask for help. A particularly powerful and fruitful form of professional development has been the school's involvement in the Writing Project at Teachers College, Columbia University, now in its second year. Led by the principal, the project has improved the teaching of writing throughout the school but has also had unintended spin-offs beyond the teaching of writing: it has led to a sharper focus on the art of teaching generally and on what students need to know.

The principal and assistant principal have a planned schedule of classroom observation with all teachers. Oral and written feedback is given. In addition, specialist teachers visit colleagues to offer support and assistance. Teachers visit each other's classrooms informally. Participation in the Writing Project has given opportunities for a wide range of staff to visit other schools to observe good practice. Planning takes place collaboratively across the grades during the two days each week when common preparation time is scheduled. These examples of professional sharing are invaluable.

The curriculum is significantly enriched by the involvement and contribution of outside agencies and bodies. For example, good collaboration exists with the District 22 Science Environmental Center and with the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens. The school also encourages students to give back to the community and engages in worthwhile charitable events such as 'Penny Harvest' and 'Jump for Heart'.

**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.**

All teachers keep full and complete records of students' work and assessments. Every student has comprehensive writing, reading and mathematics folders which classroom teachers routinely evaluate. The school's administration also evaluates them on a bi-monthly basis to assess learning. Test results in all curriculum areas are monitored by teachers and the administration and plans and goals are adjusted in the light of the data. There is good practice in formative assessment, but this is not consistent across the curriculum.

A full range of teams and committees take the monitoring of student performance seriously. The school constantly evaluates its work in the light of new data and demonstrates agile and flexible alignment of its practices and resources to make changes when necessary. The school has made changes to the curriculum or teaching approaches, as in science recently to improve learning and in literacy as a result of the desire to improve test scores in reading and writing.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is a full and detailed document. It focuses on a range of priorities which the school wishes to develop. Measurable objectives are included for each goal. However, the document is not accessible to all staff, partly because the goals, associated objectives and key action points are not clearly identified, and its usefulness as a working document for all staff to track progress is therefore limited.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Public School 134</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