



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Christopher Street School

Public School 150

**364 Sackman Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Sharon Wallace

Dates of review: May 29 - 31, 2007

Reviewer: Louise Kapner

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Christopher Street School, Public School 150, is located in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn and serves 610 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. Up until the school year 2003-2004 Public School 150 ended at grade 6. Subsequently, each year the school added a grade, and for school year 2005-2006 Public School 150 graduated its first grade 8 class.

Seventy-five percent of students are Black, which is significantly higher than similar or City schools. Twenty four percent of the students are Hispanic and 1% is White, which for both sub-groups is below similar and City-wide schools. Ninety-three percent of students are eligible for Title 1 funding which is above similar and City schools. Eighty one students, or 13%, receive special education in self-contained classes or through special education teacher support services. Six percent are English language learners. Attendance at 89% is below both City and similar schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principals are committed to providing a safe nurturing environment where all students can be successful learners.
- The school has placed a high priority on identifying and providing appropriate academic support for early grade students.
- School routines and procedures are clearly communicated to staff and students.
- The teacher center specialist is well used to provide professional development and support to teachers.
- Teachers, paraprofessionals and members of the school community are extremely supportive and respectful of each other and demonstrate a dedicated approach to working with the students.
- The school makes good use of a positive relationship with the local community-based organization to further the school's goals.
- Parents who are involved in the school feel welcomed and confident that the school is meeting their children's needs.
- Instructional programs and materials are chosen that will meet the academic needs of the students.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a grading policy across the school so that teachers clarify and share with students the expectations for assignments and course grades.
- Disaggregate and analyze with greater care data of student sub-groups to monitor performance and progress.
- Design formats that teachers can use to track individual student performance and progress in academic areas.
- Continue to provide opportunities for all teachers to receive professional development in the use of data to inform instruction.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Christopher Street School, Public School 150, about to celebrate its centennial, is a welcoming building for students who live in nearby projects and temporary housing shelters. The principal, having grown up and still living in the community, brings a great sense of care and commitment to supporting each student to be successful. She, along with her assistant principals and staff members, create a highly supportive culture for each other and the students. The focus on identifying individual student needs and providing appropriate academic instruction drives each member of the school.

Data collection is extensive. However, its compilation in formalized structures is not consistent throughout the school. There is some good practice in administration, analysis and use of assessments, but this is not consistent throughout the school. Professional development is provided by an outside partnership and staff members.

Parents who are involved as volunteers and members of the school leadership team are very satisfied with the progress of their children. Despite the school's efforts, many parents remain difficult to reach.

The principal and her cabinet have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas of improvement and are already planning to build on and develop new systems to address the needs of the school.

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 undeveloped.

The school collects a satisfactory range of data from standardized tests, internal tests and interim assessments to build a picture of how well individual students and groups of students achieve. This is effectively used to compare performance with neighboring schools, across the grades, and how well the school performs on a yearly basis in comparison to itself. However, the school does not compare the progress of cohorts of students from year to year. A good example of the effective use of comparative data by the principal was her review of the recently received English language arts scores. She compared the percentage of students now performing on each level, along with student specific scaled scores within each level, to last year's results.

While the collection of data is in place, the on-going tracking of performance and progress for individuals and groups of students is not consistent. Most teachers know their students, but formalized structures are not in place to enable them to effectively monitor individual student's skill specific performance. Currently the school does not have a consistent data recording system to ensure that student needs are being addressed. Data for some groups represented in the school are reviewed. Individual education plans for special education students and standardized results for English language learners are used to inform instruction. However, data for student sub-groups, such as by ethnicity or

students in temporary housing, is not disaggregated. Learning walks, conversations with teachers, and student portfolios provide further ways in which information is gathered about student performance.

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 works collaboratively to set goals and targets for improvement. Study groups led by the teacher center specialist and coaches, and meetings with the extended cabinet, enable school leaders to develop plans to improve instruction and raise achievement. A review of student writing portfolios indicated a need to support teachers’ in the instruction of genre writing to enhance student work. Monthly professional development provided teachers with strategies and materials that have successfully been implemented in classrooms. Data from screening inventories enables the early childhood intervention specialist to provide intense instruction for early grade students and to inform classroom grouping.

Teachers are beginning to be successful with the analysis and compilation of data in binders, including the Automate the Schools student evaluation report and results from interim assessments. Portfolios with unit assessments in literacy and mathematics and authentic student work are maintained by each teacher. Teachers review this information to identify instructional needs of their students. However, currently, the school does not have a clear understanding of students’ performance and progress because there is a lack of consistent updating of information from on-going assessments in a uniform format. Those students most in need of improvement are carefully identified and provided with push-in and pull-out services during the day, after school and Saturday academies. Personal intervention plans that record interventions and monitor progress are maintained but not updated regularly.

Few classrooms display rubrics or standards-based criteria for success. Students shared they know what is expected because teachers tell them or write it on the board. Student grades can vary, even within a class, from a percentage to a level, to “good” or “excellent.” Currently the school does not have uniform instructional prompts or a grading policy for either the elementary or middle school level.

Parents are familiar with the level 1 through 4 grading policy and that their child’s teacher is readily available should there be any questions. A monthly newsletter shares upcoming events and relevant information. The school works hard to engage parents, and offers refreshments and other incentives to encourage participation, but parents, especially on the middle school level, are not actively involved.

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 selection of core curriculum is based on students’ needs and responsive to teachers’ feedback for supportive instructional programs. The mandated mathematics program is supplemented by materials to ensure differentiated teaching of necessary skills and concepts. The choice of basal reading series incorporates all elements of a balanced literacy program while providing a structured teaching approach. Unit assessments provide data for teachers on student performance. Pacing calendars and skill of the week further focuses instruction. This year, the concentration on improving writing has seen some very good progress. Rubrics help students create standard bearing writing. Computers used for instruction and research, manipulatives in mathematics, and a recent science related over-night excursion engage students in learning.

Frequent learning walks and realistic feedback via snapshot documents is well received by teachers. Teaching and learning, and room environment are addressed. However, teacher accountability is not consistent. Not all teachers maintain their data binders at a level that will give them an on-going picture of student performance and progress. Most teachers say they know how their students are doing and what additional help is needed. However, evidence of differentiated instruction is not consistent.

Budget, staffing and scheduling decision are based on student needs. For example priority is given to maintaining small class size to enable teachers to reach all students. Double periods of science and social studies are programmed for the testing grades. Staff strengths are capitalized with non-certified upper grade teachers being supported by staff certified in content areas.

“If they’re not here, they’re not learning,” says the principal. The principal recognizes the importance of attendance and that it is a struggle to get some students to attend on a regular basis. Attendance is below similar and City schools although there is follow up with phone calls on the day of absence. Admissions and discharges representing student stability are on the higher side. There is a constant influx of new students, and since the beginning of this school year there are over 50 new admissions across all grades. The school takes very good care of their students and teachers recognize that they “present stability” and often “fill a void.” Students are eager to see their teachers and appear on the school’s steps to greet them on their first day back in August.

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.

The school has recruited a large number of young and less-experienced staff, many of whom are New York City teaching fellows. They are selected based upon high expectations for students’ performance and on their commitment to use data to improve performance.

Professional development is seen as critical and is differentiated based upon teachers’ needs and the continuous drive to improve student achievement. Professional Development Associates consults throughout the year providing teachers and

paraprofessionals with hands-on learning activities during well-attended Saturday sessions. They also support teachers with classroom visits and on-going conversations. The teacher center specialist and coaches design activities that further support instruction. For example, genre of the month writing workshops enable teachers to participate in study groups, receive comprehensive materials, and receive in-class support from the presenters. However, the school does not provide sufficient learning opportunities in the use of data to inform instruction. Common meeting time, grade conferences and informal classroom inter-visitations allow for active discussions and opportunities to share best practices. Meetings of the pupil personnel team and extended cabinet further support the school's goals.

The principal and assistant principals regularly observe teaching, look for evidence that professional development is incorporated into instruction and give constructive feedback that teachers universally agree is very helpful. The administration is well-regarded. They distribute a yearly handbook of school procedures to teachers, and rules and regulations to students, that helps set a framework for a calm, well-run school.

A student activity committee is run by the academic intervention teacher and substance abuse prevention specialist for 30 at-risk students. Social and academic support encourages learning and a recent bowling outing engaged students in a new experience. A positive partnership with Carter G Woodson provides after-school academic and cultural experiences. School input was also included when they were designing a park and playground across the street from the school.

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 principal and her cabinet recognize the challenges they face and set goals for improvement. The Comprehensive Education Plan outlines the interim and long-term goals. While there is good data to provide a measure by which the school can assess the effectiveness of their instructional program, formalized tracking and monitoring is not in use and therefore good interim measurement and comparisons of student growth is not proficient. Information from periodic assessments is used to revise plans. "Things are always changed throughout the year," staff members stated. For example, a magazine-formatted comprehensive reading program was recently incorporated into the academic intervention program for middle school students. Recently received English language arts results are being reviewed to assess and revise present programs.

The school is also using these final outcomes in planning for next year when they will be joining the Core Knowledge learning support organization. Resources will be directed towards purchasing materials and creating staffing positions to support instruction in the early grades. An effective collection and use of data, congruent monitoring of student performance and consistent expectations are areas for development and recognized as such by school leaders as they use this year's final outcomes to develop next year's goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Christopher Street School (PS 150)	∅	✓	+
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	