



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Newport School

Public School 184

**273 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Mary Anne DeVivio

Dates of review: May 29 - 30, 2007

Reviewer: George McLeman

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

The Newport School is located in the Brownsville area of Brooklyn. It teaches students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. There are currently 545 students enrolled at the school of whom, 17% are special education students, and 5% are English language learners. The school population comprises 79% Black, 18.6% Hispanic, and 1.6% Asian and other ethnic groups. Eighty-six percent of the students are eligible for Title 1 funding. The attendance is currently running at 89%, which is lower than similar and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The leadership and drive of the recently appointed principal has lifted the culture of the school and the behavior and learning of the students.
- The school has prepared a full, honest and accurate evaluation of its position and progress.
- The administrative team has established good class observational practice.
- The sharp focus on reading and writing has improved the students' scores in English language arts this year.
- The work of the special needs team has been successful in the diagnosis and acceleration of students' learning.
- The academic intervention services team has implemented effective strategies in driving up standards
- The teaching of English as a second language has contributed much to the improving achievements of English language learners.
- A range of recreational classes has been established for the benefit of the students and the community.
- The data analysis team is beginning to identify significant trends and effective strategies for improvement.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop teachers' skills in the gathering, analysis and use of data to inform their instruction.
- Develop the school's collective understanding of data on students' performance across classrooms, subjects and standards throughout the year.
- Intensify the analysis of data on all subgroups of students.
- Develop the teachers' capacity to meet the varying academic needs of students in their classrooms.
- Encourage teachers to provide more opportunities for students actively to engage in class.
- Develop school procedures to improve attendance.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school.

The school has improved considerably over the last year. From a reportedly dispirited and low achieving school, it is now orderly, purposeful and beginning to lift the students' achievements. This is mainly due to the inspiration and leadership of the principal and the efforts of her administrative team. Having established a safe and calm ethos, they collected and analyzed the data on student performance and identified underachievement and low quality teaching. Strategies for development were implemented. The administrative team understands, however, that several important challenges remain before the improvement can be fully established and effective in raising the quality of instruction and standards of achievement. The understanding and skill of teachers in using assessment data is still weak and inconsistent and the setting of goals at grade, subject and whole school levels remains to be firmly embedded to drive standards up. Overall, however, the school is well placed to make the necessary improvements.

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.

All teachers have access to data on their students' achievements. This includes the students' scores on State and regional tests and school assessments, observational data on children's physical and social development, and samples of written work collated in the students' portfolios. Some of the teachers of the younger students keep careful track of the reading progress using early childhood literacy assessments and some of the teachers in the upper grades have used the Princeton Review to identify strengths and weaknesses across the subjects. Other examples of effective collection of data are seen in the work of the special education teachers and the academic intervention services team. In both cases regular and systematic assessments are made and used to diagnose and address the students' learning needs. While the school successfully collects data about the performance of special education students, it does not do the same for ethnic groups or English language learners.

The collection and use of data across the school, however, is inconsistent and in some cases weak. Many teachers have inadequate understanding of the levels the students in their classes have reached and therefore are unable to teach at sufficiently challenging levels. Some do not have enough data on their children's achievements at the beginning of the year. While teaching, some teachers do not consistently assess the responses and progress the students make in class. Some takes notes on progress in, for example, reading conferences, but many do not record the students' understanding and progress across the curriculum.

The principal has a developing understanding of the achievements of the students across the school. She is aware, for example, of the good progress some of the students have

made over the last year from a very low base. She is also aware of the relatively low scores of the students moving from grade 3 to the older grades. The school is currently investigating and addressing this issue. To support the statistical information the principal collects a sample of written work from every class in the school each month to assess progress. The school has recently established a data committee. It comprises two representatives from each grade. Its job is to analyze data as it becomes available and to identify trends, anomalies and suggest strategies for improvement.

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 undeveloped.

The school is at an early stage of establishing data-based goal setting across the classes. Most teachers have a broad idea of the achievements of their students and set curricular aims that are in part related to previous achievement. From the State tests applied in the upper grades, for example, the teachers identify that skills have not been well learned and set targets for improvement. Teachers also discuss achievement in their grade classes and identify areas of the curriculum to be covered more thoroughly. The learning goals and the planning of instruction are not always based on a detailed understanding of the achievements and problems of the students. In general, assessment led planning is not well embedded.

There are exceptions to this, however. These are found in the work of the special education team, the academic services team and in the teaching of English as a second language. Each has diligently and effectively looked closely at the assessment data, set suitably challenging yet achievable objectives and identified the appropriate next steps for individuals. Detailed plans, strategies and resources are prepared to accelerate the learning. The goal of improving the levels of achievements of every special education student by one and half years has been met this year. The academic intervention services team has worked similarly well this year. It has identified students at risk of not meeting the standard and instigated strategies such as the mini academies, the Saturday program as well as additional individual support in classrooms or in small groups.

At school level, the administrative team closely scrutinizes the data and sees where gaps and underachievement occurs. This year, for understandable reasons, the principal selected the goals largely by herself. She considered strategies and remedies as she looked at issues. One way of lifting the overall literacy standards, in her view, for example, was to concentrate on fictional writing and set targets for each class to achieve in this respect. Similarly, goals for the school were set on improving the mathematics achievements of the students in the upper grade. These were neither data-based nor collaboratively established but necessary and effective, nevertheless.

The setting of whole school goals is now being undertaken more collaboratively with the preparation of the Comprehensive Education Plan. Senior staff, parents and teachers are making contributions to that. In the process they are looking at a wide range of data on student performance. The principal’s vision of lifting achievement has been conveyed to all students, teachers and parents. They are beginning to share her commitment and drive towards a high achieving school. The parents certainly appreciate the investment she has made and the impact she has had on the school.

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 undeveloped.

The school is making a focused effort to align instruction with the data but it is in the early stages of this. Some areas of the school’s work have succeeded in this respect but others have room for improvement. The reading curriculum is specified in detail to allow the instructional strategies to meet individual needs. This is based on a detailed step-by-step approach to gaining reading proficiency. In some classes, however, the instruction is too general and does not effectively meet individual needs or specific goals. This is sometimes related to imprecise statements of the learning intentions of the class.

In the upper grade classes there is often a lack of engagement of the students, particularly in responding to higher order questions and in having the opportunity to debate or discuss issues in class, thereby developing their confidence and competence in articulation. The principal identified that one of the reasons for the relative lack of success of the older students lay in the narrowness and subsequent lack of motivation from the curriculum at that stage. She has introduced a wider range including more sports, leisure, musical and cultural activities. Budgeting, staffing and resource decisions are made on the basis of the developing understanding of the students’ performance and outcomes. The staff know and respect the students and are responsive to their learning needs.

Student attendance is given high priority. It has improved in comparison with last year but it is still below similar schools and well below the City average.

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 principal selects and retains staff on the basis of their sharing her commitment to academic success for all students. Since her appointment she has invested much time in analysis and development of the quality of the instruction throughout the school. She quickly identified staff who had that the potential and commitment to meet the challenge. Many responded positively, others were resistant to change and some left the school. The principal and the administrative team frequently observe classes. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching across the school and are working hard to raise expectations and skill. Improving the levels of subject knowledge for teaching in the middle school grades has been a major priority.

The professional development of the instructional staff is seen as contributing to improved quality and achievement. Regional training courses and workshops have been attended and all teachers have now had the opportunity to have training in balanced literacy and core mathematics. Using the data on students’ achievements, the school identified individual strengths and weaknesses of the instructional staff and arranged a number of activities tailored to meeting professional needs. These included inter school visitations, one-on-one conferencing with administrative staff or coaches, and the setting of individual goals and targets for improvement. In addition, the instructional staff now meet regularly at grade meetings to discuss progress of the students, to share strategies, and to plan together.

This investment of time and considerable effort has brought about a calm and positive ethos for learning at the school. The students are attentive in class and show a commitment to learning. The school is orderly and runs smoothly. The school lately has also established links with the community in such ventures as the swim program at the Brownsville Recreation Center, the chess tournament, the Lions Runners Walk and Camp Vacamus through the Youth and Development organization. For her part in effecting change and establishing an improved school with greater community involvement, the principal has won the deepest respect and appreciation of the parents.

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 has established effective structures for the review and evaluation of the school's work. This is achieved through close monitoring of the curriculum, the instruction and the implementation and impact of the goals set on the students' achievements. Having set precise goals this year for improvement in the students' behavior and their writing, the principal frequently reviews progress in both. The staff now constantly observes the tone and behavior of individual classrooms and talks with teachers about their strategies for gaining more responsibility from students. In monitoring writing achievements, the principal calls for information from classes and coaches to determine how the writing goals are being met. In addition, she regularly samples the range and quality of the writing from each class and provides detailed feedback for the teachers.

The administration, together with the data analysis team, regularly reviews the progress of the students on a wider front. Their brief is to look closely at the emerging test and assessment data to identify trends, strengths and weaknesses. This they are beginning to do and there are clear signs that their work is effective. They have already identified the need to address the underachievement in the upper grades and are looking for measurable improvements in scores this summer. They have also established mini academies as one contribution to this end. Above all, they are raising the awareness of all teachers to the potential of the assessment information to identify need, to support their instruction, to plan more precisely and to accelerate learning of all students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Newport School (PS 184)	∅	✓	+
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	