



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Doris Cohen School

Public School 230

**1 Albemarle Road
Brooklyn
NY 11218**

Principal: Sharon Fiden

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Reviewer: Stephanie Krusa

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Doris I. Cohen School serves 1,188 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 5. Students are housed in two buildings, the lower school for early grades and the upper school for grades 2 through 5, which are several blocks apart. This is a site for the District 15 Gifted and Talented program, with 10 self contained gifted classes this year. The proportion of special education students is lower than similar and City at 3.5%. The student body is diverse with approximately 44% being Asian, 31% Hispanic, 21% White and 4% Black. The proportion of English language learners is growing and is now 25% which is almost double that found in similar and City school. The school receives Title 1 funding. Attendance has been consistently been above 94% for several years, which is above that of City and similar schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has established herself as an effective instructional leader by implementing school-wide reforms in curriculum, instruction and assessment.
- The principal and the administrative team set, and effectively communicate, high academic expectations to all students and staff.
- The principal and staff recognize the importance of building capacity to effectively analyze data and to link results to the instructional program.
- A comprehensive professional development program supports teachers as they implement new initiatives in literacy and math and the new assessment systems.
- There is a coherent and sequential data-driven plan for students identified as needing academic interventions.
- The pupil personnel team effectively monitors students at risk and works well with teachers and providers to enhance teaching and learning.
- The principal effectively uses data to make decisions about staffing and the budget.
- The principal, administrators and teachers address the needs of the whole child, nurturing the academic, social and emotional development of students.
- Strong and long-standing community collaborations and partnerships, especially in the arts, support the academic enrichment programs well.
- All members of the school community are committed to improving all students' achievements.

What the school needs to improve

- Involve teachers more directly in the goal setting process.
- Continue to develop ways to more fully engage parents, particularly families new to the country, in the life of the school.
- Continue to develop systems for tracking the performance and progress of individuals and groups of students over time.
- Offer even better opportunities for self-directed research and extended projects, particularly for gifted students.
- Build on staff and parents' access to technology to support the efficient and effective analysis and use of data about student achievement.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

Since the principal was appointed in June of 2004, she and the administrative team have, year on year, implemented significant changes. These have been geared to improving a school already judged to be among the top 200 in the City, by strengthening the pedagogical base and establishing uniform high expectations for curriculum, instruction and assessment in every classroom in the school. This has been achieved in close alignment with City and State mandates. Most prominent among the principal's goals is to ensure that the learning needs of all students, including all groups, are appropriately identified and addressed so that all can achieve their potential.

This is an Empowerment School which opted to design its own interim assessments. This work is well underway in literacy, with implementation of reading and writing assessments developed in collaboration with staff from Teachers College. Mathematics assessments will be rolled out this spring. Administration closely monitors this process, and is developing structures for reporting results to parents who already receive all other assessment information. All school designed interim assessment results, as well as a full range of classroom assessments, are shared among staff, so that progress is effectively tracked for every student and for all groups within each school year.

Most staff are well versed in using data to set goals and align instruction, though one or two teachers have not yet fully mastered this process. The principal has a well considered plan to further strengthen teachers' use of data and ability to differentiate. Professional development, carefully tailored over three years, has enabled staff to become a community of learners, who are already addressing the challenges of this very diverse 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 well developed.

The administrative team has set absolute expectations regarding the collection of data, and outlined a highly structured process so that staff has a clear picture of the progress of each student, each classroom and each grade. Classroom teachers, and all staff serving English language learners, students in need of academic interventions, and those supporting groups identified by the school in need of extra help participate in this process. The school refines its groupings further. For example, the principal recently analyzed the performance of English language learners and put them into groups according to their distinct needs. She then identified sequenced skills and abilities to best facilitate their acquisition of English. Consequently, all staff now focus on critical strands like essential vocabulary for the content learning and differentiate between skills required for language acquisition and for reading for meaning.

The school annually evaluates student progress for all groups, including gender and ethnic groupings, and measures its performance against similar schools. However, the organization of data showing individual student progress over more than one year is not yet established.

Nearly 25% of the student body is in the gifted program, a high performing but sometimes underserved group, because they are not always appropriately challenged. The school has identified rightly the need to develop goals and a plan for every gifted student, based on accurate data about the instructional level of each. The Schoolwide Enrichment Model for organizing the curriculum is already in place, and so the development of additional programs is being considered as one way to address the needs of gifted students.

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.

Every year the principal presents a well defined plan for systemic, long range improvement, carefully linked to the previous year’s data about student achievement. The school has well established structures in place for collaboratively using data to set long and short term goals for individual students, for all groups across the grades and for each focused subject. The administrative team sets a definitive time frame for reaching all goals identified. Particular attention is given to students in need of academic intervention services. For example, the school uses data to determine necessary interventions for students at risk, to routinely assess their progress towards goals, and to realign goals when necessary. Data frames decisions about the afterschool enrichment and the Arts Connection programs, which offer high interest arts activities designed to enhance learning and self esteem for students at risk.

The school conveys high expectations for all students, and engages parents in open communication about progress, although high expectations for some gifted students require follow up. Though the school welcomes parents and communicates in all native languages, many families new to the country do not participate fully. The principal, supported well by an active parent teacher association and parent coordinator, are collaborating on ways to further reach out to this group of parents. The administration, coaches and members of the academic interventions team are involved in setting goals and developing strategic plans for students who require extra support. Goals and plans are communicated clearly to classroom teachers so all members of the school community are committed to the school’s drive for improvement. However, teachers are not involved directly enough in the goal setting process.

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 well developed.

The administrative team has made sweeping changes since September of 2005, establishing comprehensive literacy and mathematics programs which fully align with City and State standards. Further, spending and resource allocation has strategically supported these reforms. For example, teachers have been given all the necessary

resources and professional development to support uniform implementation of these programs. As a result, the model is in place for exemplary classroom environments and uniform implementation of research validated literacy and mathematics practices. A significant effort has been made to strengthen staff use of technology to access and analyze data. New computers are purchased and relevant training completed but as yet processes are not established in practice.

Teachers use data well to align instruction so that it nearly always meets the needs of all groups of students. Assessment information is used to develop skills that need a boost and to group students by ability to work on specific tasks. As yet, differentiation for gifted and talented students is not so well planned.

Budgeting and scheduling decisions support needs revealed in data. For instance, the administrative team established the Schoolwide Enrichment Model to build self esteem, engagement and enhanced learning for all students, including those who are struggling. Components of each planned activity identify the specific new vocabulary and concepts, especially for participating English language learners, in enjoyable social contexts.

The schedule provides teachers with weekly grade level meetings for dialogue and planning with literacy and mathematics coaches, and with staff who provide academic interventions. Additionally, staff compare progress across grades and analyze to ensure skills develop and content learning gets more difficult as students move up each year. Effective ongoing assessments are established so progress is carefully monitored for all students and for each group. All teachers assess student learning and flexibly adjust instruction to accommodate individual and groups of students' needs.

Students, parents and staff are all valued members of the school community and work together toward improvement. Students are engaged in their studies and confidently consult adults for assistance with questions or concerns about schoolwork, or issues outside of the classroom. Attendance is monitored rigorously. When students are regularly chronically late or absent, immediate action is taken to improve matters.

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.

New staff members are carefully selected, based on understanding and ability to implement the school's initiatives, and a firm belief that professional learning never ends. Also key is the belief that all children can learn if instruction is aligned accurately. New teachers must be conversant with data and actively participate in using it to discern student strengths and needs. School governance is efficient and highly structured. The day flows smoothly because routines and procedures are clear and well communicated.

Professional development closely aligns with needs of teachers and students as revealed by data. Consultants model components of the reading and writing workshop programs, and plan opportunities for teachers to study together. Lead literacy teachers are being trained so that capacity is further developed. All teachers attend workshops on how to plan the learning of a wide range of subject content through reading for meaning.

Administrators closely monitor the quality of instruction through ongoing conferring and formal and informal observations. High expectations are very clearly stated, with regular

walk throughs, using established criteria to evaluate how well different classes and grades implement agreed practices and methodologies for required curriculum and instruction. Immediate feedback, which includes expected development and improvement steps is given to teachers. Collegial sharing and peer mentoring is encouraged so that staff expertise grows exponentially. This is one example of the strong leadership displayed by the principal who is widely respected for successfully initiating school wide reforms.

Based on emerging data, staff work together to plan, evaluate students' subsequent learning, and revise plans. There is ongoing communication among and between teachers and instructional leaders. The whole child is considered. Staff work effectively with all students, through programs such as peer mediation and conflict resolution, which enable everyone to be positively involved in supporting their school mates. Support services and active partnerships with Educators for Social Responsibility and the Brooklyn Psychiatric Center help the school reach its goals for students' well-developed social skills.

The school's curriculum program is very well supported through partnerships with the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, David Marquis Studio, Mark Morris Dance Company, Arts Connection, New York University and Teachers College. A long standing collaboration with the Greenwood Cemetery provides ongoing support through specially designed arts and academic programs across the grades.

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.

In the summer of 2004, the principal established a deeply reflective cycle of review and renewal, which is used each year when planning professional development, revising curriculum plans and setting goals for continued improvement. This is evident in the school's self evaluation which acknowledges areas for improvement. Structures for ongoing assessment are established in all plans so that progress towards goals can be continually evaluated. All staff meet regularly to discuss, review, evaluate and compare student progress for classes, grades and across the school, and analyze results with similar schools, to inform planning and revision of goals. The administrative team adroitly realigns practices and resources to match needs, emerging from ongoing measurement of effectiveness. This work, primarily done by administrators and key staff, has not yet sufficiently involved all teachers, although some involvement in grade meetings is evident. The principal has plans to include teacher leaders, who will in turn involve their peers.

One key component of successive planning and goal setting activities is availability of the full range of interim assessment information. Because the new, school designed interim assessments are just being implemented this year, full data is not yet available. To its credit, the staff very closely monitors student learning given the data at hand, and responsively adjusts the program. There are clear plans for rolling out the school's assessments across all subjects to add results to the data pool.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Doris L. Cohen Public School 230	∅	✓	+
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