



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Weeksville School**

**Public School 243**

**1580 Dean Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11213**

**Principal: Karen Hambright**

**Dates of review: April 18 - 19, 2007**

**Reviewer: Ken Bryan**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

This is an elementary school serving 457 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The present principal has been in post for two years. The school's ethnic composition is 82% Black, 15% Hispanic, 1% White and 2% Asian and other ethnic groups. The proportion of students eligible for Title 1 funding is 87%, which is broadly in line with similar schools. There are 58 special education students and 13 English language learners. The student attendance rate is 92% which is similar to City-wide school averages.

The school is distinctive in that it was the second free school for African-Americans after slavery, built in the first African-American neighborhood in Brooklyn.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The vision, leadership and level of commitment provided by the principal are powerful forces in the school
- The school gathers and utilizes data for each student and at classroom and grade levels.
- The school effectively uses teams for collaborative planning, professional development and student intervention programs.
- The principal ensures that there is a very effective professional development program.
- Intervention programs are well-planned and are informed through collaboration and the use of data.
- Budgeting decisions are needs-led, creative and targeted.
- There is an effective and comprehensive extended-day program.
- The quality of instruction is consistently high, delivered by a dedicated faculty.
- The faculty knows their students well and they set challenging, individualized goals.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the levels of confidence and competence of the faculty in the use of data to analyze and compare student performance.
- Increase the levels of parent involvement in school.
- Increase the use of information technology for students and teachers.
- Continue to raise the level of attendance by setting challenging targets for grades and classes.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a proficient school with some well-developed features.**

Teamwork, professional support and a very clear understanding of the needs of every child lie at the heart of this thriving school. The principal has effectively introduced a culture of openness and professional support where teachers can plan and evaluate their work. The school uses data effectively to monitor the performance of each student and to set goals accordingly. The intervention programs are particularly successful mechanisms for addressing individual needs. The quality of instruction is consistently high and the classrooms are havens of both rigor and enjoyment. The school is a calm, orderly and well-managed learning environment where children thrive. The children are content and feel challenged and the teachers feel professionally supported. Staff turn-over is consequently very low.

The principal and her core team have been very skillful in the use of the budget to fund teaching resources, targeted intervention programs, extended day activities and very supportive professional development programs. The school reaches out into the community and parents are kept fully informed about their child's progress. In addition, the school openly embraces all forms of assistance from local organizations. As this is such an important area, the school must re-double its efforts to increase parental involvement.

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school gathers a mixture of State and City tests and its own interim assessments to have a clear understanding of each student. This data is aggregated effectively for classes and grades. The school uses a good range of diagnostic, summative and formative data to inform goal-setting for individual students. These include early childhood literacy assessment system-2 tests, Columbia University's Teachers College reading assessments and a mixture of effective unit and interim measures to support the curriculum areas. Formative assessment tools, such as student conferences, running records and reading profiles are used continually and rigorously to enhance one-to-one learning. The school also uses many intervention strategies to support its special education students and other student groups in need of push-in programs.

Teachers know their children well and they are particularly adept at providing well informed individualized learning programs. The staff members are developing their skills to rigorously analyze data and the use of color-coded records for at risk children is an excellent example of this approach. The school uses the available disaggregated data to provide an objective, constantly up-dated understanding of groups in the school, such as English language learners and special education students. The school can also demonstrate that it tracks the performance of other groups, such as boys and girls and high achieving students. Effective time-related comparisons are made through the use of teacher conferences and the school compares its performance with other local, network

schools. The principal skillfully analyzes comparative data and she has set challenging targets for future improvement. She has developed a culture of careful performance-level analysis within the school.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

Data is used to drive the school’s goal-setting agenda. Some data is used to inform the Comprehensive Education Plan, the planning for instruction, the formulation of intervention programs and the tracking of individual student progress. Cluster teams, carefully review aspects of the Comprehensive Education Plan and action plans are detailed and focus upon student performance and are driven by the available data. The Comprehensive Education Plan, the curriculum map and the data analysis file clearly reflect the links between data and goal setting such as the planning for student intervention programs. Teachers meet at grade conferences and during instructional team meetings to consistently explore documented themes. The school leadership team meets once a month to review the Comprehensive Education Plan. Using the data, the school leaders and the faculty use the available data to set medium and long term goals.

The school successfully uses data to inform the work of the academic intervention staff who have provided extended-day classes and ‘push-in’ programs for students with personal intervention plans. The child study group is a very effective vehicle for identifying need. A variety of educational specialists meet to determine the level and scope of the interventions. The school has developed a successful color-coded system to identify at-risk students and to provide a platform for goal setting. Teachers regularly meet in grade teams to collaboratively set challenging goals for students. The success of these strategies has led to an increase in the number of students performing at or above grade level in reading and mathematics, and a reduction in the number of students performing below grade level. The school’s targets are very challenging, especially in mathematics.

The school effectively uses raw score diagnostic data to set targets for improvement. This information is regularly communicated to parents. Information includes the calendar, newsletters, current trends and expectations, past performance data and the school’s overall vision. Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activities of all members of the school community through grade meetings, the effective instruction team, the workings of the school leadership team, academic intervention meetings and regular communications with the parents. Teamwork is a very strong feature of the school’s community. A challenge for the school’s leadership is to raise expectations even further and to develop a ‘we can do it’ philosophy.

**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 school effectively aligns the instructional activity, resources and professional development around well-informed plans, which focus upon student learning and data throughout. The planning process is a successful feature. June planning meetings, grade

level conferences, the use of the extended day time are very robust examples of the school's collaborations. Curriculum maps clearly demonstrate skilful modifications and approaches to the mandated curriculum and they are adjusted in response to the available data. The high quality of instruction is consistent across the school. Teachers are held accountable for providing differentiated instruction and for student outcomes and data lies at the heart of this expectation. The teachers are developing flexibility with their planning and skillfully differentiate their instruction based upon the needs of the students and upon available in-school, City or Statewide data.

Budgeting decisions are needs-led. After a period of under-funding, the principal has effectively and creatively introduced more funds for small group instruction, interventions, resources and professional development. The principal flexibly makes budgeting decisions, based upon data analysis, to adjust scheduling and staffing. The intervention programs and the use of small group instruction are very good examples of these modifications.

The levels of student attendance have been variable in the past. An attendance team has been created to help challenge absence and celebrate attendance. There are clearly defined structures in place to monitor student absence and the school is very proactive in this area. The students are consistently engaged, their needs are met and the classes are stimulating and motivating. With the guidance of the parent coordinator, the parents are kept well informed, and there are strong links with the students' homes. The staff knows and respects the students and they respond very well to their academic and personal needs.

**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.**

While most faculty staff were inherited by the new principal, teachers have been selected according to their expertise and upon their capacity to use data rigorously. The principal is careful to select staff that can challenge and motivate the students. The vetting process is effective. The principal has high expectations for her faculty both in terms of pedagogic proficiency and its ability to improve student performance. Staff turn-over is very low and the principal uses one-to-one staff development conferences to gauge preferences and needs.

Staff development is a strong feature of the school. All programs respond to the needs of the staff following rigorous reviews. A core team of administrators, coaches and teachers meets regularly to monitor the quality of instruction and learning. Mathematics and literacy coaches meet with grade teachers during weekly common preparation times. The direction given by the core team is a very powerful vehicle for improving instructional quality and it conducts regular evaluations of the effectiveness of the schools professional development programs.

There is a strong sense of collaboration and support in an open and transparent atmosphere of trust and respect. The principal, during her short time at the school has engendered an approach based upon solid teamwork. Ideas, methods and resources are frequently shared. The principal and assistant principal visit classrooms each day and they have a strong relationship with the literacy and mathematics' coaches, the guidance and special education specialists, the parent coordinator and staff. The teachers continually review and adapt their instructional programs during grade conferences and

common preparation time. Again, the core team guides the process. This is an influential group which has ensured that the highest quality of teaching is maintained. Peer support is another strong feature of the school. Classroom inter-visitations are common and the use of turn-key instruction during faculty-led professional development meetings is a very effective aspect.

The principal is highly respected by the whole school community and she provides excellent operational and instructional leadership. The school operates very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The school is a calm, orderly and well-managed learning environment where children thrive. The children are content and feel challenged and the teachers feel professionally supported. As a consequence, staff turn-over is very low.

The use of partnerships with outside bodies is another strong feature. The school is supported by numerous outside organizations, such as a music program, a heritage center, sports programs, enrichment clubs and support for the intervention and after-school programs. The principal is well respected by all members of the school community. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis and procedures are followed consistently.

**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 are of the school's work is proficient**

The school frequently reviews its goals and plans. Goals set by the region are reviewed and progress is considered accordingly by the school's administration. The Comprehensive Education Plan is written yearly and modifications are made throughout the year by the school leadership team. The June planning meeting is the initial part of the cycle. The Comprehensive Education Plan is seen as a working document and it is an effective tool for whole school improvement. Student data is continually being used to inform the school self review process. Interim assessments provide the principal with evidence for modifications to the programs. The assessment, instructional, leadership and pupil personnel teams meet frequently to identify needs and to review progress. This structure is a very effective aspect of the school.

Information gathered from periodic assessments is constantly reviewed in light of individual and school-wide goals. Grade and common preparation time, conferences are used very effectively to consider student data and to set further goals for improvement. Curriculum maps are regularly modified, taking into account the achievements of the students. This degree of teamwork and collaboration is another very good feature. The cycle for setting short, medium and long-term goals begins in June each year and these plans and strategies are constantly reviewed and modified throughout the year. The school has adopted an agile and flexible but robust strategy for school self-evaluation. The establishing of quantifiable targets is a developing feature in the school, as it strives to raise expectations amongst the faculty.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Weeksville School (PS 243)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<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>		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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>			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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<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.		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<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>	<b>∅</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</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>			<b>X</b>
<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>	<b>∅</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</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>			<b>X</b>
<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>	<b>∅</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</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>		<b>X</b>	