



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Dag Hammarskjold School**

**Public School 254**

**1801 Avenue Y  
Brooklyn  
NY 11235**

**Principal: Linda Alhonote**

**Dates of review: September 27 – 29, 2006**

**Reviewer: Jacqueline Pentlow**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Dag Hammarskjold School has 600 students from grades pre kindergarten to 5. The students come from a variety of backgrounds with 33% White, 13% Black, 10% Hispanic and 40% from Asian and other ethnic groups. Just over 22% of the students are English language learners and 6% are special education students. 65% of students are Title 1 eligible. Attendance is above other New York City Department of Education schools, being the second highest in the district last year.

The student population is showing a change in nature with a steady increase of students whose first language is not English. These are mainly coming from Russia and China. The school has changed steadily over the last few years, moving away from a traditional method of instruction to one that encourages the students in more active learning methods.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principal provide very good leadership to the school.
- The program for students whose first language is not English is successful in rapidly developing their language proficiency.
- Staff work in a collaborative way for the benefit of the students.
- Staff professional development is having a positive impact in the classroom.
- The technology course the students follow is very effective.
- The very good relationships between the staff and students lead to a supportive learning environment.
- There are high expectations of the students that are understood and accepted by the students.
- The school holds a wide range of workshops for parents.
- The school modifies the curriculum to meet the needs of the students.
- The school provides a stimulating working environment that encourages learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Widen the way in which data is analyzed and used in order to identify trends, progress of different groups and to focus on specific areas of improvement.
- Develop strategies for the parents who do not attend the workshops to involve them more fully in the learning of their children.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a well developed school.**

The Dag Hammarskjold School is well developed. It has steadily changed from a school using traditional methods of instruction to one that involves the students in far more active learning. Over the last four years the staff has changed from being solely female to now include more male teachers. The staff are now far more representative of the cultures of the students. The principal and assistant principal complement each other's skills to provide the very strong leadership to move the school forward.

### 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 collects data from a variety of sources to establish how well the students are doing. Students are assessed regularly and the school tracks the data on each student. It is an area that is developing and new systems are being introduced to give a more detailed record of the progress of students at an individual level, and to identify areas of concern for individuals. The data is shared with all staff and is used in target setting to raise attainment.

However, the data is not analyzed to identify the trends in performance of particular groups and sub groups of students and trends over time are not fully analyzed. This means that opportunities are missed to identify a number of specific areas for further development.

Standards in the school are high overall in all grades with 87% students attaining levels 3 or 4 in 2006. Standards are similar in all the different subjects that are tested.

**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.**

All members of staff make an effective contribution to the planning process in the school. This planning is integrated into a coherent format using the Comprehensive Education Plan. The effectiveness of progress towards achieving the goals is tracked well through its detailed subsections. The whole school accurately reviews the progress of individual students and the different grades at least twice in each semester. This is a powerful tool for informing teachers about the effectiveness of their work and the development of the students, and has an impact on the progress they make.

The intervention strategies the school employs for those students with particular needs are good. For example, the school has a very good success rate in moving students who are only just beginning to learn English to becoming more proficient. The school recognizes that many of these students are not totally fluent and so continues to support them in order to further develop their language skills. The number of students with special needs is small compared to many other schools but the intervention strategies it employs are highly effective, whether the needs are of an academic or emotional nature. Good staff training has been undertaken ensuring that the staff have a very good understanding of how to match the different needs of students.

The school offers a wide variety of workshops for the parents. For some of these sessions the turnout is high, for example, almost all the parents of new students classified as English language learners attended for a workshop during the review. More general workshops do not get such high attendance and the involvement of the parents in the learning of their children is variable.

**Quality Statement 3 – Build and Align Capacity: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The curriculum is broad and balanced, extending the experience of the students very effectively. In addition to English language arts and mathematics, the students enjoy science, social studies, physical activities, computing and the arts. A particular strength in this school is the increasing use of technology and the effective computer course for the students. In one class seen, half the students had a computer at home, but the skills the students demonstrated showed just how effectively the school is developing all the students' skills to a similar level.

During the last four years the school has moved from a traditional approach to instruction to one that is engaging the students in more active methods of learning. Students' writing has changed from a traditional model, where all would be writing on the same topic, to one with more open-ended tasks that allow the students to write 'from the heart'. There is an area set aside in the school where any student can write down their thoughts, ideas and feelings. In mathematics too there is now a greater variety of teaching styles employed with a much stronger emphasis on mathematical patterns, thinking and mental exercises. This approach is much more successful in raising student achievement.

The classroom environments are bright and stimulating settings that encourage learning; there are good displays of students' work, and posters giving guidance on what they are expected to achieve. The teachers have very high expectations of the students. The students understand that if they do not give of their best they will be challenged to improve. They also acknowledge the excellent support that is given to them by the teachers if they have difficulties with a task. In talking to the students this aspect of the school's work was the area they most strongly emphasized as a key characteristic of the school. The behavior of students is very good and attendance levels are high. Students are encouraged to have good level of attendance. There are effective follow up procedures in place if they are absent without an explanation. The success of this approach is seen by the fact that in 2006 attendance levels were the second highest in the district.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The principal and assistant principal complement each other well. They give very strong leadership to the school. They have a clear vision of how they wish to move the school forward. They have high expectations of their staff and are well respected by the staff and parents. Everyone recognizes the way in which the school has changed and the way it is constantly striving to improve.

The school has used outside consultants to lead staff development sessions on specific themes. These have been successful in moving the school forward. The administration has also developed teachers' individual professional development to encourage in-depth knowledge on topics. As a result, staff are empowered to lead school workshop sessions. The grade team preparation sessions are used very effectively to ensure in depth discussions of the programs being followed and to develop skills such as data analysis.

There is a formal process whereby staff are regularly observed taking classes and detailed constructive feedback is given to the teachers on their work. The principal and assistant principal also undertake regular walkthroughs in the school and use these as an opportunity to identify areas that need improvement, either intervening immediately in a constructive way or finding a suitable time to feedback and develop the skills of the teacher.

The school and principal are well respected by the parents; many parents have made a positive choice to send their children to this school. The day-to-day running of the school is calm and well organized and creates an effective learning atmosphere where students can thrive. The school is aware of safety issues surrounding the arrival and dismissal of students and is constantly monitoring these to ensure that the students are safe.

**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.**

The school leadership and individual teachers monitor the progress of students using a combination of class assessments and the end of unit tests. Several effective uses of everyday assessment as an activity to consolidate an area of weak understanding were seen during the visit. When teachers grade work they use a formative model. This ensures that the students know how to improve their work and raise it to the next level.

The school checks all aspects of its work in meeting and working towards its goals on a regular basis. Small manageable steps are identified and the school has coherent processes in place to make sure that these steps are completed successfully. All the systems in the school are used to assist in assessing how well the plan to meet the goals is working. This works well at many levels, from that of the individual student to a whole school level.

Special education students are supported very effectively; gifted and talented students are suitably challenged to extend their work. Equal emphasis is given to all students striving to raise their attainment levels. The staff collaborate effectively at all levels, from planning their work together to the ways in which they teach the curriculum. This ensures that the staff have ownership of the curriculum and all work is focused to benefit the students. The paraprofessionals give good support to students and teachers in the classrooms.

The school is constantly striving for excellence; it aspires to give all its students a broad and balanced experience and for them to leave as well rounded individuals.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Dag Hammarskjold School (PS 254)</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>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X