



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Curtis Estabrook School

Public School 272

**101 – 124 Seaview Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Ms Dakota Reyes

Dates of review: January 30 - 31, 2007

Reviewer: George Wallace

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Curtis Estabrook School has 805 students in grades pre-kindergarten through to grade 5. The proportion of English language learners is 4% which is well below the average for similar and City wide schools. 12% of students are special education students. The ethnic composition of the school is 77% Black, 15% Hispanic and 2% White. The school receives Title 1 funding. Student attendance was falling in the years 2003 to 2005, however, 2006 has shown improvement and the current attendance figure of 93% is higher than at any time in recent years. The principal is new and took up her position in March 2006.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The vision and drive of the principal is very clear and is having a positive impact on the work of the school.
- The principal's has a clear understanding of how to prioritize the needs of the school through data analysis and has produced a good quality action plan
- Data analysis for reading in early years is excellent.
- The professional development program for the school is strong and is matched extremely well to the needs of the school.
- The development of a leadership forum is a bold move that is working well to raise students' social and academic standards.
- The procedures in place to raise attendance are good and are working.

What the school needs to improve

- To help staff to collect, analyze and use data in a consistent way on a class, grade and whole school basis.
- To track standards and progress more rigorously in all grades.
- Develop collaboration and team-work in order to significantly raise standards.
- Increase the number of coaching and support staff for literacy and mathematics.
- Develop more effective systems for evaluating student and teacher work.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Since the arrival of the new principal eleven months ago the school has started to improve in several respects. Staff, students and parents testify that the changes that have occurred are very much for the better, but at the same time they recognize that there is much work still to be done. Students' views about the quality of their school vary. They all have positive things to say, but at the same time are concerned about the behavior of some students and dislike being caught up in reprimands for inappropriate action which has nothing to do with them. They all express delight at some aspects of the school, whether it be teaching in some classes and subjects, or after school activities. Attendance has risen over the past eleven months.

The principal quickly assessed the qualities of the school, drew up an action plan and set about working to it with her assistant principals. The plan is good and has brought about positive changes for the students. Data gathering, analysis and goal setting is fully understood at the most senior levels in the school, but expertise and practice in using such approaches to aid school improvement varies considerably across the school. However, there is one excellent example of the way in which student achievement is tracked and the outcomes of the data analysis used to further improvements. Elsewhere, there are very few examples of teachers keeping records of students' learning at class, grade and subject levels across the school. Team work exists but is not yet especially strong. Therefore there are no opportunities to interrogate such information to see what it might tell staff about ways to improve students' learning. The pupil personnel group works well as a team in the interests of individual students, but neither they nor any other information is evaluated or brought to bear in various guises to raise standards. However, the vision for the school is accepted and the principal is respected for her drive and understanding of the issues necessary to bring about improvements for the school.

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

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

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

The school has recently started to gather and value the importance of data as a way of interpreting the performance of the school. However, whilst there are some strengths in its use, it is not in common use throughout the school. For example, the collection of reading data for K through Grade 3, and also the principal's own identification, collection and analysis of data are strong, but there is insufficient analysis by either gender or ethnicity. The collection of reading data allows students' progress to be tracked class by class, and across grades. The information is regularly updated and therefore the principal and teachers have an up-to-date picture of standards and progress. The information is used, together with additional teacher data on students, to identify students, particularly in Grade 1, who have significant reading difficulties. Additionally, teachers collect data on all individual students. This information is satisfactorily used to produce Progress Reports

and provide anecdotal information about the strengths and weaknesses of individual students for the pupil personnel team. Data collected for absences and incidents is well developed and used effectively.

The principal gathers relevant data and is aware of the standing of the school in relation to similar schools. Such information is leading to specific action that is widening the staff's data collection skills. Some good work on analysis has recently occurred with new goals set for teachers and students. As a result of analysis of the 2006 State test scores the principal has identified the progress of special education students as an immediate target for improvement. Because overall tracking of students' achievements is weak, there is no class, grade or whole school understanding of the performance and progress of students. Therefore there is no recognition of patterns of performance between different groups of 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 proficient.

On joining the school eleven months ago, the principal quickly assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the school and put a sharply focused and manageable action plan in place. This has been the working document to steer the school, rather than the Comprehensive Education Plan, which had largely been produced by the previous administration. Written into the new action plan is a well-targeted program of staff professional development. In addition the program was set out with measurable goals to bring about stronger understanding of the issues facing the school. An evaluation of the plan is yet to occur. Goals and plans are not yet in place for individual classes or across grades partly because data does not exist in a sufficiently clear format to allow such planning to occur. In addition, training has only recently begun to bring about such planning.

Teachers know their students well and have data available on each student. Support personnel, together with teachers identify students most at risk in terms of their academic achievement. Such information is then discussed as a case study at pupil personnel team meetings. For each student, the outcomes arising from these discussions correctly vary from a requirement for more information, to immediate action involving parents. The process is effective, but needs to involve personal and social issues more strongly than currently is the case.

The principal, with the support of different groups of staff, are ensuring that students recognize that expectations about their behavior and learning are high, and that they will continue to get higher. In some cases, such as in the school dining hall, a few students are making the experience of eating and socializing over a meal, very difficult. Most staff now understand that for good behavior to occur a consistently strong approach inside and out of the classroom is required. Parents are invited to discuss with teachers and other staff, issues of progress regarding their child. Too many parents, however, often do not respond.

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

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The mandated curriculum is taught together with an ever-widening program of activities for students. Specific decisions about the best ways in which to plan and teach aspects of the curriculum are often discussed at the monthly formal grade meetings. However, in most cases teachers prepare their teaching independently or seek support from some of their colleagues. The quality of team work to support curriculum development varies across the school and is therefore inconsistent as a way of improving teaching throughout the school. There is no school wide consensus that same grade teachers either plan jointly or agree an improvement plan for their area of the school. However, many teachers are working strongly in the interests of their students. They believe that good quality planning is central to helping ensure that students learn and make progress, and that differentiation based on their knowledge of their students is key, if students are to improve.

Systems are satisfactorily in place to monitor and control the school budget. An example of a new way in which the school budget is being used to raise standards is through the reading program, and the purchase of a ‘book for the month’ for each class. Decisions taken about staffing are based upon the action plan and therefore student needs. For example, the success of the Reading Recovery program for Grade 1 is driving thinking about the need for additional reading and writing support in the school. All teachers work to a specific schedule. The time allocated to subjects is satisfactorily based on resource availability and known needs of the students. The quality of teaching varies across the school, with a significant proportion strongly engaging students leading to positive learning outcomes. Students do not always feel that the staff responds positively to them. One such example is the feeling of unfairness when the whole class is punished when there are only a small number of known individuals offending. Students, however, feel they do have adults in school that they trust and can turn to if anxious about something.

Attendance procedures are good. A recent emphasis on improving attendance is working and more students are coming to school than at any time before in recent years.

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.

Effective procedures for hiring staff are in place, but have only recently been established as a consequence of a new administration. A particularly well-developed aspect of the school is that of professional development. It is clear to the principal, and to an ever-increasing number of teachers, that a school wide focus on evaluating teaching, learning and standards is necessary to raise standards. Therefore professional development is being driven by the needs of the students so that teaching quality improves. In the best examples, students are experiencing ever more engaging lessons and improving their behavior and academic standards. The support in the early years for reading and writing is good, but there is a need for more coaching staff to service the whole school. The principal and assistant principals frequently observe lessons. Teachers for the most part value the feedback received which affirms good practice and provides ideas for future

teaching. There is no formal program of peer observation, although new teachers have observed colleagues and found the experiences extremely beneficial to their own practice.

The school has a leadership forum which includes about 15 staff. Their work is being steered by the principals' knowledge of students' needs, and the goal to raise standards. Teachers are successfully working on various projects with a view to strengthening the understanding of the links between review and evaluation of information including data, planning, teaching and learning. This area of leadership and the responsibilities and decisions that arise from such a leadership team, are in their infancy. The parents, students, and staff say that the new principal has made an amazing difference to the school over the past eleven months. They all recognize however, that there is still much to do to create the environment where effective learning is central to the goal of significantly improving standards. Equally, they know that the principal is making a difference and has the vision and means to effect a change so that students' life chances improve considerably.

Procedures for the smooth running of the school are in place and known to all staff and helpers. Already there have been improvements in the provision of clubs for students, and these are linked to ways of improving behavior and academic standards. There are other clubs that students would love to see in their school.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school action plan is a good quality working tool. The principal and assistant principal know that over time it has been important to re-evaluate goals as certain aspects of school life change. The goals set have been subdivided into clear measurable tasks with success criteria. A new plan is being devised, but will not be complete until a full evaluation of the current plan has been undertaken. The use of data at a leadership level is beginning to show that the informational and statistical analysis does lead to questions being asked about students and their achievements or otherwise. However, there is no widespread use of data throughout the school, except at the individual student level, and then used mainly to provide information for (a) students' Progress Reports, and (b) the pupil personnel team should the need arise. The principal and assistant principal are collecting and analyzing data in relation to the action plan goals. No assessment data is being used in any consistent way to make comparisons about patterns in standards achieved by students in classes, grades or, with teachers at whole school level. It is the principal's action plan that is currently driving change and improvement. Data is collected and analyzed, and where necessary, changes to the action plan priorities are made.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

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| SCHOOL NAME: Curtis Estabrook School (PS 272) | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| Quality Score | | X | |

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| 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.

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| 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 | |

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| 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 | |