



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Richard Stockton School

Public School 297

**700 Park Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Maureen Garrity

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Reviewer: Barbara Kwiecinski

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Richard Stockton School is an elementary school for students from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. It caters for the needs of 436 students. The school is comprised of 52% black students, 47% Hispanic students and a small number of Asian, White and others. Currently 14.4% of students are English language learners whose main language is Spanish. The percentage of special education students is higher than similar schools at 5.1%. The school has Title 1 funding. The school's attendance is 90.4% which is lower than that of similar schools.

The school has very few transient students however the changing population in the community has resulted in student numbers declining.

The Principal has been in post for two years and has provided stability for the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The peace builder program underpins student behavior and results in a smooth running school.
- The school provides a safe nurturing family environment where rigorous instruction based on the principles of learning is delivered effectively.
- The principal exhibits role model behavior and very effectively leads the faculty to create a partnership of life long learners.
- The school uses many data sources to understand the performance and progress of students.
- The enrichment programs support the mandated curriculum and have a positive effect on student engagement and progress.
- All students feel safe and well supported both in their academic and personal performance.
- The principal places a great emphasis on teacher accountability which has resulted in improved instruction.
- On going professional development, related to student need takes high priority and student performance is improving.
- Students with the greatest need of improvement are very well supported and make good progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Further differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all categories of interest to the school, particularly to meet the needs and learning styles of boys and girls.
- Improve the delivery of science and share the best practice from other curriculum areas in the school.
- Continue to develop the link between mathematics and literacy in order to raise student progress in mathematics.
- Further develop the use of technology to support individual student learning.
- Further develop the involvement of parents and caregivers in the students' learning journey.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

All members of the school community work collaboratively to create a family school that meets the needs of students. The principal very effectively leads the faculty to create a calm environment where all students are supported both academically and personally. Through the peace builder program all students have been helped to improve their conflict resolution skills. Common ground rules are in place and as a consequence students show respect for their peers and staff.

The school is warm and welcoming and in addition the parent coordinator works very positively with families to make them feel secure in an education setting. The displays on classroom walls and corridors are of high quality and reinforce student learning. The atmosphere is very positive and all students expressed their delight to be at school and spoke with pride about their work, the levels they were working at and the progress towards their goals.

The principal heavily emphasizes the importance of consistency of practice for both students and teachers. These expectations are clearly outlined in the staff handbook which contains all school policies and procedures. The cabinet lead by example, setting high expectations and as a result students' progress is improving.

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.

During the last two years the school has had a period of positive growth and stability where data has been used to understand the performance of all students and raise achievement. The principal has set up very effective systems where cabinet work collectively, not only to understand the performance and progress of students at classroom and grade level but also the performance of ethnic groups, English language learners and special education students. There is now consistency of practice where all teachers use assessment binders, whose structure has been developed collaboratively. The mathematics and literacy coaches are working very closely with teachers and have designed plans to support teachers in their interpretation and the use of data. This has enabled effective comparisons of student performance to be made across subjects and grade levels. The school has rightly recognized the need to segregate the data further and look closely at the differences in performance of boys and girls.

The principal chose to team up with a more experienced principal who leads a very effective school. This has provided the opportunity for the school to compare themselves and their strategies to those of higher achieving schools as well as making comparisons to similar schools. A member of the academic intervention team supports each grade and works with teachers to assess, evaluate and plan for individual students. The analysis of

grade-wide tests, Princeton Review and running records helps to fine-tune individualized instruction. The school compares its performance to past performances and the adoption of a workshop model in reading and writing is helping to raise standards.

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.

All grades have common free periods each week where collaborative planning takes place. This results in effective dialogue where plans and targets are refined. The comprehensive education plan provides the focus for the strategic goal planning process and is amended three times a year. From this strategic plan coaches support teachers to set objectively measurable long and short term plans. Cabinet look at trends formally every two weeks and minutes are taken at grade level meetings so that movement towards goals can be compared across grades and classrooms. This inclusive, formalized process results in teachers understanding the need to plan instruction appropriately for the different groups within the school. The performance and progress of boys in reading has improved since the introduction of appropriate non-fictional texts.

At the beginning of each year data is broken down into sub-levels in order to further refine the tracking process. The academic intervention team gives very good support to students with the greatest need whose levels are rising. In addition all teachers have a ‘professional period’ where they work with small groups of students to give additional support, working on strategies as to how performance can be increased.

High expectations are conveyed to students and the peace builder program has effectively supported students to improve their conflict resolution. The high quality displays of student work and the visible academic requirements, result in students being proud of their work and keen to do even better. Parents are encouraged to be involved in school life and the school works with ‘Learning Leaders’ to train parents on how to support their child’s education. ‘Walk in your child’s shoes’ is a particularly successful initiative. The parent coordinator works tirelessly with parents to help them understand the learning journey of the students.

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 believes that its environment provides a culture where students can achieve academic success and become lifetime learners. To this end the curriculum focuses on developing literacy and mathematical skills that meet the mandatory curriculum but provides a greater depth to support student learning. Two examples of this are where an artist from ‘Studio in a School’ works with second grade and special needs students and third grade and special needs students work with ‘Reach the World’ in the study of geography, culture and climate. In addition the instructional support in technology is integral to all aspects of the education of the students. These initiatives impact positively on students’ progress and results are improving.

Every classroom and corridor is alive with attractive displays of student's class work and bulletin boards in corridors and classrooms include curriculum expectations. All teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes and the continuous informal dialogue, lesson observations and the annual one to ones between the principal and all staff result in improved student outcomes. Differentiated planning is being further refined to take into account the different learning styles of boys and girls. Students speak very positively about the school and understand the levels they are working at and what they need to do to further improve. They like coming to school and are respectful to each other and feel well supported by all teachers in both their academic and personal need.

Budgeting decisions are based entirely on need and scheduling successfully meets the needs of students. For example, the academic intervention teachers support each grade and work with small numbers of students whose performance is improving. Staffing decisions are made collaboratively and the coaches are instrumental in the process. One example of this was where second and third grade teachers needed more support to effectively deliver phonics to improve student outcomes and appropriate professional development was provided.

The school is working very hard to improve attendance and systems are in place to inform parents of all absences. The high incidence of asthma within the community affects student attendance and the school is developing partnership projects with Project Fit and New York Road Runners to support students. Students and parents speak very positively of this support and attendance is improving as a consequence.

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 recognized the need for further professional development in mathematics to establish deeper and more inclusive instruction as data driven mathematics instruction is less successful in fourth and fifth grade. To this end a coach was appointed on her ability to interpret data and support the teachers to refine instruction. All candidates have to work with the students prior to their appointment and the principal looks for teachers who are flexible and respond positively to all student need. The mathematics teachers are now feeling more confident and welcome the support.

The principal has professional development plans in place for all staff. These are related to student and teacher need. All plans have defined outcomes and all staff attending external training turnkey in common preparation periods and are responsible for evaluating outcomes in terms of impact on the students' progress. This results in greater collaboration and greater consistency in lesson delivery.

The principal is very visible within the school; she knows the staff and students well and observes lessons on a daily basis. She sets very high standards and students are eager to talk to her about their progress. She is constantly in dialogue with all staff members and the informal walkthroughs which have specific foci result in continued professional development for all teachers. The sharing of good practice between teachers is extending and some teachers are now teacher leaders and work with the coaches to model lessons. As a consequence the quality of instruction continues to improve. The school recognizes the need to further improve the delivery of science. In a short space of time the principal

has moved the teachers from teaching traditionally to a workshop model and she is seen by teachers, students and parents as a person with 'vast energy' working tirelessly to improve the students' learning journey. The calm, organized school community provides students with a secure working environment and results are improving.

The partnerships with community based organizations add another dimension to the curriculum for example a professional singer from the National chorale trains the school's glee club and some of the third grade students receive training in classical dance. Students talk excitedly about these initiatives and which help their motivation.

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 comprehensive education plan is a working document and is formally revised three times a year. The plan is refined and the goals and plans, which are in place for all students, are regularly refined. Student improvement is the driving goal and successive phases of goal setting are characterized by realignment of practice. The link between literacy and mathematics was identified as an area for development and following realignment of practice students' ability to read and interpret material has improved and they are beginning to speak with confidence about their work.

The collaborative learning community results in teachers sharing their practice. This results in comparisons of students' progress both within and across classrooms. The principal is working hard to support all teachers to reflect on their practice and consider the impact of their teaching on student learning. The goal setting process is going to be further refined to include success criteria and interim goals against which progress can be measured for all groups of interest to the school.

All systems are evaluated. The school has a very positive approach to review and reassess practice all the time.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Richard Stockton School (PS 297)	∅	✓	+
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	