



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Clara Cardwell School

Public School 308

**616 Quincy Street
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: Dr. Gail Bell-Baptiste

Dates of review: April 18 - 19, 2007

Reviewer: Stephanie Krusa

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well
What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Clara Cardwell School, Public School 308, serves 936 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The special education cohort makes up 16% of the student body, with 13% in cooperative team teaching classes and 3% in self-contained classrooms.

English language learners comprise 3.5% of the student body. Recent immigrants are from Bangladesh and Sudan, with the rate of new English language learners holding at 1% of the student body, for each of the last 3 years. Most students, 85%, are Black. Hispanic students represent 10% of the population, 4% are Asian and 1% are White. Student attendance is 92.5%, slightly above that of similar and City schools. This is a Title One school with 81% of students eligible, which is 16% above that of similar schools and almost 7% above City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is an experienced and effective instructional leader who spearheads a quest for excellence with staff, students and parents.
- The school staff understands the impact self-esteem has on learning and nurtures the academic, social and emotional dimensions of each student.
- The staff is deeply committed to students, communicating high expectations and marshalling all resources to ensure that each student has opportunities to learn.
- The pupil progress team effectively monitors students at risk and works well with teachers and providers to enhance learning.
- Students are engaged in studies and feel supported, valued and challenged.
- The eclectic curriculum reflects the school's belief that all students have the right to a challenging education.
- All staff work together to ensure a calm, focused, safe learning community.
- The school has many established collaborations which significantly enhance its academic and arts programs.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop expertise among staff in analyzing available data, in creating new data relevant to the needs of students, and using data to set very specific goals for students and groups.
- Use the spring Comprehensive Education Plan's goal-setting process to build staff participation in ongoing planning and revision throughout the year.
- Build and study longitudinal databases to profile progress for individual students, grades and groups, over time, to understand patterns, trends and anomalies.
- Continue to strengthen differentiation of instruction and authentic assessment to further support student learning.
- Build components of technology to provide access for students and families.
- Strengthen communication with parents and facilitate their access to online supports for more effective partnering around student achievement.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Clara Cardwell School provides a challenging and rigorous academic program for general and special education and gifted students. The school culture emphasizes the giftedness of every student. Under the principal's leadership, the school has a history of innovative initiatives which focus on academic rigor, character building and career and college planning.

The school staff is focused on student achievement and works collegially to improve curriculum and instruction. Under the direction of coaches, many staff collect and analyze available data, but the process is relatively new and not uniformly well developed. The school's eclectic academic program is aligned with City mandates and incorporates Teachers College Units of Study for Literacy. Professional development is guided by several research-validated practices. A culture of high expectations is communicated to students and parents and the school has refocused efforts on improving student achievement through extended reading periods of up to two hours a day. Staff have also developed a highly effective mathematics curriculum which integrates art, writing and the use of manipulatives.

A strong core of veteran staff provides collegial support for new teachers by sharing best practices and building capacity to effect continuous improvement. Staff continually review results from formal and interim assessments and from class work to evaluate progress and revise plans. The school's many established collaborations with outside organizations significantly enhance its academic and arts programs.

The experienced principal has distinguished herself and this school by creating a comprehensive and innovative curriculum which meets the needs of the community.

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.

Key staff collect and disseminate available data to teachers who then develop individual classroom binders, which vary in quality. The principal indicates, in the school's self evaluation, that she is encouraging staff to make the collection of data their own responsibility in the future. The cabinet analyzes available data, and uses it to assist staff in tailoring the program to address student needs. However, because the school is not generating enough of its own specific data, this process depends too much on test results and there is too little proactive analysis of school generated individual and group data.

The school pays close attention to overall student progress over time, with emphasis on grade and whole-school results in each of the content areas. Teachers effectively compare progress across classrooms and with similar schools, but results of formal assessments for some student groups indicate that further analysis is required to define and better meet needs of specific groups. For example, there are significant gaps in

performance between male and female students in State language arts tests at grades 4 and 8, and for students in general and special classes in a number of formal tests which have not been addressed.

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.

This school has experienced success over the years because of its positive culture, high expectations and effective curriculum. Academic goals for literacy and mathematics, kindergarten through grade 8, are posted in hallways throughout the school. The staff works collaboratively to set challenging goals for students, though goals are more aligned with mandated curriculum than with careful analysis of assessment data. All staff are involved in plans and timelines for reaching goals for student achievement, though some parents were unaware of opportunities, such as on-line resources, for partnering with the school.

The school has a large special education population, and all staff work hard to meet the needs of students who require academic interventions. The pupil progress team effectively monitors students at risk and works well with teachers and providers to enhance learning. The pupil personnel committee regularly reviews the progress of selected students with individual education plans. The committee makes immediate recommendations if current plans require revision. Assistant principals coordinate plans for students without individual education plans but are also in need of academic intervention services. They work closely with the pupil personnel committee and regularly report on student progress at cabinet meetings. Academic interventions occur during morning and afternoon extended-day sessions, at lunch, on Saturdays and are supplemented by pull out and push in guidance and academic support during the school day. Student progress is reported daily, on section sheets, so that classroom teachers and all service providers can reference and coordinate ongoing efforts to support individual children. The school implements the School-wide Enrichment Model, providing Friday afternoon activities geared to student interests. These activities are also considered academic interventions because they provide opportunities for all students to select engaging projects that enhance content, skills and social development while building self esteem.

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 curriculum is fully aligned with City and State mandates, and reflects the school’s belief that all their students have the right to a challenging education. This is illustrated in the school’s long and distinguished chess history. This year a middle school team is traveling to California for the national competition, in which Clara Cardwell students have typically ranked among the top ten. The junior chess team is going to Tennessee this spring for the elementary tournament.

The administrative team and coaches have selected supplementary curriculum materials for some disciplines. These complement mandated assessments, giving a broader and more detailed picture of student progress which helps teachers better prepare students for high stakes tests. For example, students preparing for the Mathematics A Regents use several test preparation materials, in addition to covering the mandated curriculum. Also, customary literacy assessments are implemented along with the Teachers College reading assessments to determine levels and to group students for instruction.

The school staff understands the impact self-esteem has on learning and nurtures the academic, social and emotional dimensions of each student. All staff accept responsibility for student progress and have actively sought professional development seen to match student needs. Though teachers understand the need to differentiate instruction, and many have attended workshops, effective differentiation is not uniformly present in all classrooms. Student attendance is a high priority and absence is followed up quickly. Students are engaged in schoolwork and those interviewed report that teachers push them to their limits. Every student asked, across the grades, could identify the high school and college they hoped to attend.

Staffing and scheduling decisions align with student needs, as reflected in available data sources. Every classroom has a rich resource of mathematics materials and new fiction and nonfiction books, but classroom libraries need additional strengthening. Technology labs provide access for every student, as classes, on grade, take six-week technology units which integrate core content. For example, middle school students learn to develop power-point presentations for mandated exit projects in social studies and science. Though the number of computers is adequate for the student body, there are insufficient laptops and smartboards to further enhance learning, especially for the many students who do not otherwise have access to computers.

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.

To be a member of this faculty, a candidate must demonstrate firm belief that all students can master the academic program and excel. Candidates must also commit to ongoing growth and be conversant with best practices such as inquiry and project-based learning, authentic assessment and research-validated instructional programs such as the workshop model for literacy and mathematics.

All teachers have had an opportunity to attend at least one workshop at Teachers College, to support the school's focus on reading and writing for meaning, across all disciplines. In addition, teachers participate in regional workshops and courses offered by collaborating universities and consulting firms. For example, the principal and several staff attended Confratute, an annual week-long conference on gifted education held at the University of Connecticut. Attendees have implemented the Friday afternoon School-wide Enrichment Model initiative, and teach the cohort of screened gifted students in designated grades. Professional development plans emanate from data and from reflective conversations with staff regarding such things as data analysis to define student needs, and differentiation of instruction. The principal has taken steps to strengthen both of these areas and has plans to continue this work during in-house, grade level and faculty meetings, through ongoing collaboration with community and university partners, and with staff at sister schools.

The administrative team makes expectations known through focused walkthroughs, formal observations, in-house meetings and communications. The cabinet oversees assessment of ongoing curriculum and works with staff to revise plans, based on student results in interim and formal tests. Staff regularly discuss results and support each other through intervisitations and collegial sharing. Guidance counselors work effectively with students on social and emotional issues and facilitate the school's student-run conflict resolution program. The school has benefited from many long established relationships with community partners which address academic and social issues, provide student leadership training and spearhead community service projects. For example, the City Year program sends a cohort of volunteer college students who engage selected students in an after-school program celebrating, through reading, writing and art activities, accomplishments of well-known role models. Working with City Year volunteers, students have created permanent murals throughout the school honoring individuals who inspire the entire community.

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.

Curriculum plans are revised as data is available, with clearly defined timeframes, objectives and checkpoints carefully aligned with high stakes assessments. Teachers use comparisons between classes and with similar schools to assess progress and revise plans. Though teachers are building capacity to react to needs evidenced in the data, as yet, there is insufficient study to ensure that next steps are effectively matched to student needs. The Comprehensive Education Plan is not referred to during the year, thus staff do not effectively participate in meaningful planning and teachers cannot regularly orient instruction and assessment against updated goals within the plan.

The principal knows the needs of students, constituents and school. For example, she recently drew staff attention to the achievement gap by ordering professional texts on the topic for all teachers. However, the school does not have a clear enough process to ensure that teachers plan effectively to meet the needs of students as revealed by the data.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Clara Cardwell School (PS 308)	∅	✓	+
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	