

School of the Performing Arts Public School

School of Performing Arts

Public School 315

**2310 Glenwood Road
Brooklyn
NY 11210**

Principal: Beverly Ffolkes - Bryant

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

PS 315 is a large, popular, community, elementary performing arts school in Brooklyn. The diversity of its languages and its culture are more than most other public schools in the city of New York. It is a Collaborative Community Practice school and is one of a small group of seven elementary schools of the performing arts. There are almost 1000 students and it shares a site, so overcapacity and shared facilities are common.

When it opened seven years ago it was considered a low performing school but for the last three years scores have increased steadily and performance is high.

It has a large number of students receiving free school meals so is a 'Title One' funded school. It has a number of ELL and special education needs students. It has excellent relationships and partnerships with many well known and famous performing arts institutions which is aspirational for the students.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides inspirational and hands on leadership, this is supported by all stakeholders.
- Collaboration between staff and the teams is an important feature of the school as a community. Everyone comments on the family feel.
- The school has consistently made academic progress over the last 3 years in particular has reduce the number of students not surpassing level 1.
- The presence of the arts permeates through the school and provides excellent opportunities for students to develop new skills and boosts their self-confidence.
- The school is extremely successful in writing and achieving bids/grants; resources are plentiful and appropriate in and round the school.
- The school has some excellent working partnerships with outside organizations—mainly in the arts field.
- Being a recognized as a Collaborative Community of Practice (CPP) school supports the community based culture of the school and promotes the sharing of good practice especially in literacy.
- Classroom environments, displays, newsletters and other communications are of a high quality.
- High quality teaching in particular in grades 3-5.
- Good structures for implementing the independent reading part of balanced literacy program.
- Progress made by individual students as an outcome of the test preparation scheme.
- Stakeholders are all supporters of the school, its work and teachers and its charismatic leader.
- Students enjoy coming to school, they are happy, pleasant, friendly and polite and they have pride in their school.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the use of data in a systematic, organized and a coherent way that can be easily accessible to all staff to track student progress and inform teaching and learning to meet all students' needs, supported by technology.
- Using and developing the recently introduced process of collecting 'soft' data into a more sophisticated and analytical method of identifying staff, parents and students viewpoints to move the school forward.
- Focused professional development to help teachers use ongoing assessment, analyze student work and other relevant data to make instructional decisions based on student performance.
- The use of more technology by teachers and students to support learning in the classroom.
- Share the good practice that already exists within the school through peer observations, study groups, co-teaching, mentoring, identifying key teachers within each grade and subject areas.
- In order to further improve independent reading within the balanced literacy framework, there needs to be more leveled books in each classroom library (K-2) to

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sustain rigorous independent reading.

- Opportunities to develop the school library is identified as a key priority for the school - the library is a good resource but having to share it with another school means it cannot be developed as a learning center for an arts school, reduces the scope for the use of technology to promote independent learning opportunities. It could also be a focus area for exhibiting students works and arts projects - a gallery space.
- The school has identified clearly as a priority greater parental involvement and needs to find alternative ways to involve families; this should help underpin the formation of a strong PTA.

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Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

PS 315 is a vibrant, oversubscribed school, which attracts a diverse student population. It successfully cooperates with another school on the shared site but overcrowding is an issue. The school has gone from strength to strength in recent years mainly due to the leadership of its principal and its whole school staff commitment.

This is well-developed elementary school in which students make good academic progress, benefiting greatly from the richness of the performing arts curriculum. All the staff of the school is highly committed and are excellent role models for the students; consequently the young people develop into self confident youngster's prepared and ready for the next stage of their education.

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

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is overall proficient with some areas more developed than others.

The school has available large amounts of summative and formative data relating to progress and the individual needs of each of its students. It uses the summative data from state and city test data and their own tracking system of student achievement year to year. The principal requires her staff to collect, analyze and share a considerable amount of data with her on a monthly basis. She also gathers data from her own regular and thorough observations of teachers and students' work. The principal, by her own admission, accepts that the monitoring of student performance is mainly driven by her. In each classroom teachers have available folders, which contain a plethora of information both quantitative and qualitative about each of their students, all collated and available to support targeted intervention.

Students perform best in mathematics followed by science, social science and literacy. The highest performers in the school are the students in the 4th and 5th grades. The principal feels that perhaps the presence of formal testing does impact and spurs students on to do better. However, from the city data and the schools own data it has been identified that teaching and learning quality is less strong in the lower grades and needs to be improved from Kindergarten to grade 2. In order to provide a strong reading and writing base for all students the principal and her cabinet have rewritten the literacy curriculum to ensure phonetics are taught daily.

Teachers thoroughly assess student's work, frequently collecting data from a variety of sources including: reviewing student growth by pre and post test scores and reviewing development of work in books over a period of time. Peer assessment, use of videos and self assessments are all strategies used by the dance teacher; other teachers use

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quizzes, games, projects, running records, one to one student reading conferences and presentations to gather information for their data files.

The principal has recently started to gather data systematically from the stakeholder groups and she will use this along with the existing information to look at additional ways of generating and using data more effectively. To do this she has identified the need to empower her staff in the use of data in a systematic, organized and a coherent way that can be accessed easily, in order to track student progress and inform teaching and learning to meet all students' needs, supported by technology.

Quality Statement 2: 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.

Many students arrive in school with levels well below that which is expected, but the school has systems in place to ensure most students achieve well by the time they graduate from the school. The number of student achieving level one has fallen each year and is well below 10% and of the city and state averages.

Goals are set annually by teachers and are monitored by the Academic Intervention Services (AIS) team and grade coordinator teams. Cabinet and Senior Leadership Team then invite subject coordinators to meetings to update them and to demonstrate progress made.

The principal and her Assistant Principal (AP) initially interrogate various sources of data and identify low performing students. Then through the different teams and structures within the school the instructional leaders are consulted and class teacher involved in developing and implementing strategies to support groups or individuals. The programs are available to the students before, during and after the school to help them to succeed. Staff is highly committed to supporting these extra classes for the students and give willingly of their time. A conference call with a teacher in New Zealand highlighted his work as literacy consultant for the school and how he had worked with another teacher to impact on the success of one particular student identified as at risk.

The needs of ELL students are well catered for, one class observed was using a variety of learning styles to meet the different needs of the students, they worked cooperatively and were supportive of each other and they had access to computers and used them effectively. Examples of students who had specific needs were discussed with the AIS team leader and principal and they illustrated how systems were tailored and effective in meeting the needs of individuals.

Parents are involved and consulted at all stages of their children's education and those interviewed were highly supportive of the effort care all the staff provided including the security team personnel and the fact the principal knows each of her students by name was powerful in the respect and trust they had in her.

The principal has identified the need for more focused professional development to support the staff to know how to analyze data to set goals and drive improvement forward.

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

This area of the school's work is overall well developed with some area still requiring further development.

The curriculum, and in many areas its delivery, is innovative and affords students excellent opportunities to perform in some aspect of their school life. There is a very wide range of arts programs and these are delivered successfully by integrating with other subjects as far possible, good examples were seen in social science. The arts not only contribute to broadening the curriculum, but also add enrichment and develop the self-esteem and confidence of the students. Tensions have arisen because of conflict between delivery of the elementary curriculum and the broader arts program. Consequently, the principal is keen to ensure that they are fully integrated into the academic program with learning outcomes clearly identified and achieved.

'Test Preparation' is a method successfully used and developed by the school. It does not rely on regular test resources but has its own distinctive approach to ensuring students are ready for test text. This has become embedded into the instructional approach of the school and is contributory factor for the increased test scores over the last three years.

The 'Independent Reading' scheme, is carried out by the whole school, has proved to be a very positive way to start each day. The classroom libraries and the reading resources room are key in supporting this scheme. There is still a need for more leveled books in each classroom library (K-2) to sustain rigorous independent reading.

The arts cluster provides excellent opportunities and experiences for most students in music, dance and visual art and drama. Increasingly these are being delivered through an integrated approach often using 'artists in residency' to work with the teachers. Examples include: 'The Singing Book'; dance, involving cultural input around the Chinese New Year; the school chorus, which has sung at the Carnegie Hall; and the gifted and talent students, who have worked with the Metropolitan and City Operas.

Apart from the wide range of extra curricular activities, that support the performing arts, there are other activities including a chess club, which recently achieved 10th place in a national competition; parents interviewed commented on how motivating this had been for their son.

Collaborative team teaching is used successfully and this was observed in and independent reading grade 3 inclusion class. The teachers plan, collaborate effectively and teach to their strengths. Data and evidence present in the teacher's file displayed excellent progress especially in writing from September to May.

In order to move instructional activity forward especially around inquiry based learning there is need for professional development in and around classroom teaching and delivery using technology.

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and

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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 overall well developed.

The leadership and management of school are extremely effective. The principal provides inspirational, but hands on, leadership and has been a key figure in the history of the school but in particular in driving up standards over the last three years. She now wants to empower her staff more to drive the curriculum forward and improve the level of instruction for even greater improvement in the areas teaching and learning. The principal, her teams and staff are highly committed and worked collaboratively. The school is recognized as a CCP school.

It constantly seeks out and successfully applies for grants and extra funding to support the many arts activities and programs, which are an intrinsic part of the school success. For example, they have recently secured an Arts Space Grant to fund refurbishing the dance studio; an ELL Enrichment Through the Arts Grant; and the New York Historical Society's Learning Leaders' Program Grant to name a few.

Recruitment is not an issue at present. The school has a successful partnership with Brooklyn College and tends to recruit from there as the school already works with the student teachers by providing training for them on their premises.

Professional development is key to the success and development. The principal constantly encourages her staff to read educational papers; she provides them with a tool kit of essential books, a reading list each summer vacation and these are then developed into workshops on teaching pedagogy at the start of the new academic year. The professional development team meets monthly and plans activities for the staff. More time for planning curriculum delivery is needed on a regular basis.

Quality Statement 5: 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 principal and her AP consistently and regularly monitor and review work in the classroom. This is then further supported by the cabinet team meetings, which are weekly. The cabinet consists of teachers from all disciplines and areas of the school. They regularly review test scores and other data, they discuss work samples and looked for commonality or emerging problems. Following this they work with their teams, or clusters, to provide the support needed in the classroom and for individuals students. There is a policy that all staff know they can have access to the principal or assistant principal at any time to discuss student well being, student learning or concerns. Grade level meetings are also key to addressing instructional concerns and at the time of the review the literacy coach was reviewing and rewriting parts of the writing program as a response to issues in grade 3. Intervention strategies have been used successfully in science and other areas of the curriculum when there is a perceived need. Performance development programs are flexible to meet needs or gaps in training identified.

Communication is strong and effective. The administrative bulletins, which the principal issues regularly, are aimed to keep staff up to date and abreast of new initiatives and

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resources around instructional issues, priorities and good practice.

The school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) is monitored monthly and the team invites resource personnel to give them updates and presentations on how their work is aligning itself with the goals of the CEP.

Other key observations

Overcrowding and having to share major areas of the school is a key concern of the principal. She feels that this impacts on the learning of the students and causes frustrations for staff and students alike. In particular, the lack of a dedicated library space for students is critical. It is a considerable distance away from the main school, it is timetabled for access and therefore not only restricts the amount of time it can be used but also the types of activities that it could be used for, which are central to a performing arts school.

Staff and the parents commented on the 'family' atmosphere of the school. Teachers enjoy working at the school they feel supported, their self-esteem and self-worth are high. They feel comfortable; enjoy working collaboratively; being challenged professionally; and it is a stable staff.

Meeting the parents was informative and lively; they support the school and the principal fully. However, the principal still finds it hard to engage the parents in the academic learning their children. Parents are happy to turn up in large numbers to school performances and social events, but are much less responsive to invitations to be involved in the academic learning of their children or to become a member of the PTA, an essential aspect of an elementary school.

Finally, the school self-evaluation form prepared by the principal is a powerful and illuminating document. The principal has been extremely reflective, honest and evaluative in her comments; she knows her school well; its strengths and areas for development. By completing the document so comprehensively she has identified clearly, and with sound reasoning, backed by evidence, the next steps for her school to move forward. This process now needs to be shared and developed across the school with all its stakeholders.

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Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.	o	✓	+
<p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are “objective” when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards-based; • consistent across students; • capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the performance of different students to be compared; and • learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified. 			X
<p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p>		X	
<p>1.3 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, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p>		X	

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Quality Statement 2: 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.	o	✓	+
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 it develops 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 warranting attention.			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. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably 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

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	o	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.		X	
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.		X	
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. 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		X
3.6 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
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	

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Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	0	✓	+
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 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 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.			X

Quality Statement 5: 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.	0	✓	+
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 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 interim 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 each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.			X