



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Public School 326
1800 Utica Avenue
Brooklyn
New York 11234**

Principal: Colleen Ducey

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Reviewer: Linda Murgatroyd

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 326 is an Early Childhood Center, which serves an ethnically diverse population in Brooklyn. It has 289 students in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and grade 1. Students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, although the greatest proportion (77%) comes from Black families. In addition, 10% are Hispanic, with the remaining small number of students being from other backgrounds. There are a very small number of special education students. The proportion of students (74%) known to be Title 1 eligible is slightly lower than that of City and similar schools, but does not include students in the pre-kindergarten class who attend part-time. The proportion of students who are newly arrived in the country is broadly average for New York City schools, most coming from the Caribbean. Approximately 16% of students are identified as English language learners.

The school has a close working relationship with PS 119, as its students automatically transfer there on completing grade 1.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school gives an excellent start to students' education, and the good progress they make shows in their test results long after they have left the school.
- The principal is a highly effective leader, who successfully shares her vision of the school as a learning community embracing students, staff, parents and visitors.
- High expectations, shared with students and parents, permeate the work of the school.
- Data is analyzed thoroughly and used exceptionally well to pinpoint exactly what students have learned and to plan the next steps.
- The school respects and values each student as an individual so that students develop their confidence and enjoy learning.
- Staff are skilled at addressing students' wider needs in order to facilitate learning.
- Staff support for one another is outstanding, and is central to the good teaching to be seen throughout the school.
- The school builds very strong partnerships with parents, who hold the school in high regard.
- Despite the school's success, there is a constant drive for improvement.
- Data on students' performance is exceptionally well used in decision-making at all levels, and staff constantly assess progress and revise goals and plans in response to new information.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue the work to improve students' achievement in writing to more closely align it with achievement in speaking and listening.
- Develop students' use of information technology across the curriculum to improve their skills.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

This Early Learning Center gives students an excellent start to their education. It has a welcoming culture in which everyone is valued, and high expectations are conveyed to staff, students and parents. Staff know their students very well, both through the statistical data provided by thorough assessments and through careful observation in the classroom and the wider environment of the school. Data is used very well in decision-making at all levels, whether to plan programs for individual students or in goal setting for the school as a whole. This detailed use of data is central to the success of the school. The teamwork between staff is an outstanding feature, ensuring that all are able to give their best.

Parents are very satisfied with the school and the progress their children make. The school is described by parents and staff as 'like a family'.

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 well-developed.

The school collects very detailed data on the performance and progress of each student. All staff assess their students' achievements in a range of ways; formally through the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), as well as in assessments used by teachers to check on specific skills and through ongoing observations of students in class. Because these assessments are usually designed and scored in school, they are quickly analyzed and used to guide instruction. All staff regularly update these data, together with information about students' personal development, often on a daily basis, to give a detailed picture of the progress of each student and to indicate the next steps in learning. This use of data plays a prominent role in the good achievement of students throughout the school.

The principal and her cabinet carefully monitor students' overall performance, ensuring that the achievement of language, gender and ability groups is analyzed. This data is also used very well to compare the progress of students in each content area, class by class and grade by grade, to ensure that teaching and learning are equally effective for all students. Staff also compare the students' present and past results and the relative performance of each cohort of students as they pass through the school. There are very few schools in the city which work exclusively with students of this age group, but comparisons are carried out with performance in these similar schools. The principal, together with the partner school, has carried out a longitudinal study to track the progress of her ex-students. This shows that the good progress made by students while they are at the school is maintained, and that former students of PS 326 show higher scores in grade 3 and 4 tests than students who began their education in other schools.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well-developed.

The detailed assessment described above is used very effectively to ensure that students make good progress. Teachers are confident in analyzing and interpreting statistical data, and also know their students very well as individuals. This close knowledge is used creatively to plan the next learning steps for them. As soon as a student is identified as having difficulty, even in a minor way, the response is rapid. Students are carefully grouped according to what they need to learn or practice. The school’s extended day classes are small and each is targeted at a particular skill or concept. These groupings are frequently revised, so that interventions are short-term and are changed when the particular skill or concept has been mastered.

Teachers analyze the results of their assessments and constantly adapt their teaching methods and presentation of ideas in response to ensure that each student has the best possible chance to make progress. Staff constantly discuss their students’ progress, sharing ideas and alternative ways of teaching the same content to maximize achievement. The school places a strong emphasis on preventing underachievement, and as a result of staff’s attention to detail and flexible approach, very few students are referred for special education. When a referral to community services is needed, these services work together and share information, ensuring a coordinated approach to students and their families.

The school regards working closely with parents and caregivers as essential for such young students, and works hard to involve them in their children’s learning. Parents are kept well informed and are actively involved in discussion of goals and progress towards them. In addition, they are given information about the themes being taught, ideas of how to support their children at home and help with positive discipline strategies. The parental education program is responsive to parents’ needs, and staff do their best to reach out to those parents who find it difficult to attend school events. This flexible approach results in very high levels of attendance at events held on Saturdays when parents and caregivers are less likely to be working.

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 achieves a well-balanced curriculum which has a clear focus on the basic skills of English language arts and mathematics, as well as providing good opportunities for science, art, and physical education. The curriculum and the effective instruction found throughout the school, is highly successful in motivating students, who obviously enjoy school and develop very positive attitudes. They are fully absorbed in their learning, and the results can be seen in their very good achievement. Attendance is well above average compared with similar and City-wide schools, and any absences or tardiness are actively addressed. The school is characterized by the concern of all staff for students’ welfare. Every child is well known to the staff and appreciated as an individual, within a culture of

mutual respect and pleasure in their successes. Parents praise this aspect of the school's work, feeling confident in the school's concern for their children.

The choice of programs is very closely guided by the analysis of data. For instance, as students' results in the NYSESLAT showed that speaking and listening were better developed than reading and writing, the school implemented a 'push-in' period for guided literacy teaching in very small groups. This is an excellent example of careful budgeting, deployment of staff and resources in response to a need identified through data analysis. It has been highly successful, as recent results show that 85% of kindergarten and grade 1 students met or exceeded grade level standards in literacy. Despite this, the school is not complacent, and there is a continuing focus on developing writing to raise standards further. Information technology is not extensively used across content areas, partly because the school is not adequately wired, and the development of students' skills is not as strong as in other curriculum areas.

Data is used very carefully to examine how well particular skills and content areas are being taught and learned class by class and grade by grade. The constant discussion between staff about the effectiveness of their teaching, sharing ideas and strategies, is a particular strength of the school. In this way, all staff are accountable for their students' progress not only formally through discussions with the principal but also in a highly supportive partnership with colleagues.

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.

Because of the uncertainty about numbers in the pre-kindergarten classes, there is a relatively high turn-over of staff. New staff are very carefully selected either through already being known to the school or via a rigorous interview process. The principal makes her expectations very clear, and appointments are based on the school's estimate of the applicant's capacity to learn and positive attitudes towards children. This process is very effective in building a team of reflective practitioners who work together extremely well. One member of staff, describing this teamwork, said, 'I am nothing without my colleagues.' Although there are also good opportunities for professional development from outside, the most effective learning comes from this teamwork, in which discussion is constantly focused on teachers' knowledge of how well their students are doing and what they need to do to improve.

The principal sets very high standards and is very successful in sharing these with everyone connected with the school. She is very well respected by staff, students and parents, particularly for her informal style and supportive approach. One staff member said, 'She is at my side, but everyone knows she is in charge.' Because she is constantly in classrooms and other areas of the school, informally observing staff, talking to students, and looking at their work, as well as carrying out formal observations, she has a very detailed knowledge of the strengths and areas for development of all her staff. The culture of mutual support and high expectations she has created is very effective in ensuring maximum performance from teachers, other staff and students. Staff attendance is very high in comparison to other schools. The school runs very smoothly, with well-established routines which are quickly learned by students, even though they are very young. Because of this, they settle quickly and feel confident in 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 well-developed.

Despite being a successful school, there is no complacency, and all staff are constantly seeking to raise students' achievement further. Decision-making is shared across all constituencies, and school planning is determined by the results of data analysis and staff members' close knowledge of students' progress. Priorities for the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) are established as a collaborative exercise, involving staff and other constituencies in detailed discussion of data. Long-term measurable objectives are set, with interim goals, for individual student achievement as well as for long-term goal setting, and are carefully measured and evaluated. Staff are willing to try new initiatives in response to the data, and these too are regularly reviewed as part of the ongoing monitoring of students' achievement and school improvement, and adapted when necessary. For example, the plans for the spending of Title 3 funds, to support English language learners, were revised because of parents' low attendance at some evening meetings. Instead, the school is developing a Saturday Academy, at which turnout is expected to be much higher.

The revision of plans in response to new information is also a feature of work with individual students. Close observation of students and careful analysis of their results are used to adapt approaches when they are shown not to be having the desired effect. The short-term groupings of students for the 'push-in' literacy sessions and the extended day program are good examples of the school's flexible approach based on the use of data. This is highly successful in ensuring good progress and in preventing the need for special education interventions.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 326	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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