



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Elijah G Stroud School

Middle School 353

**750 Classon Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11238**

Principal: Claudette Eссор

Dates of review: October 5 – 6, 2006

Reviewer: Alan Kaye

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

This new middle school opened in September 2005 and had a student population of 172 in the year 2005 - 2006. Now in its second year of operation, it has 190 students from 6th through 8th grade. It is anticipated that the maximum enrollment of 225 will be achieved next year. The school community comprises students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The vast majority of the students are Black, over 87%, but there are also small numbers of Hispanic, Asian and White students. Approximately 12% are special education students. Four percent are classified as English language learners and 85% of the students are Title 1 eligible. Attendance rates are currently 89%, slightly below the City average.

The school is located on the same site as an elementary school, PS 316. It shares a gymnasium, library, auditorium, cafeteria and schoolyard with that school. It currently has two classes in grade 6, three classes in grade 7 and two classes in grade 8. There is a self-contained special education class serving 11 students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides strong, determined and effective leadership; parents, students and teachers greatly respect and share her focused vision for the school.
- The cabinet works hard to ensure that the school has a strong capacity for growth and development.
- There has been a recent improvement in student behavior, conduct and attendance.
- The students' attitudes to learning have been transformed and the vast majority of students now work attentively in class.
- The school is rapidly developing links with parents and community groups in order to enhance its effectiveness and reputation.
- Professional development is given the highest priority and is of high quality.
- Staff work collaboratively and have a strong commitment to raise achievement.
- There is good participation in extended day activities by the majority of students in the school, beyond those they are mandated to attend.
- The advisory program ensures that all students are well known to at least one member of staff and are challenged to succeed.
- The school has used its resources wisely to provide high levels of student support.

What the school needs to improve

- Review the work of the academic intervention service to enable it to work with students in most need in both English language arts and mathematics from the beginning of each school year.
- When resources allow, invest in diagnostic instruments in English language arts and mathematics and use the results to guide instruction for those most in need.
- Develop a coordinated school-wide assessment system for all subjects as well as English language arts and mathematics and use it to track more precisely the progress of all students.
- Provide more opportunities for staff to discuss and review academic data so as to revise instruction.
- Engage all staff, students and parents in academic goal setting and performance evaluation.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school, which has some well developed features.

The principal provides strong, determined and effective leadership. She works with energy and commitment and there has been a recent marked and dramatic improvement in student behavior, conduct and attendance. The assistant principal, guidance counselor, parent coordinator and half of the teaching staff joined the school at the start of its second year of operation, just four weeks before this review. Professional development is given the highest priority. All staff, including those new to the school, have worked hard and collaboratively to create a climate for learning in the school. All in the school are committed to raising standards of achievement.

The school community, led by the principal, had to concentrate in its first year of operation on student conduct and behavior since these issues were seriously inhibiting students' learning. Now the school is embarking on the next phase of its development, with a clear focus on raising levels of student achievement. The school knows there is much to do and has well developed plans. It has a very strong capacity to improve.

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.

The school gathers and uses the data derived from City and State assessments and tests as well as the grades resulting from teacher marked assignments. These are used to determine which students may benefit from the extended day provision. There is good participation in extended day activities by the majority of students in the school, beyond those mandated to attend.

Data is also used to determine which students will receive additional support from the academic intervention service. At the present time, the school uses Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA) to test those students who achieve levels 1 and 2 on State and City assessments in writing and reading. In time, it is planned to use it also with students who score level 3, to improve teachers' detailed knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses in this area. Teachers regularly and routinely assess students' work across the curriculum, making helpful comments and suggestions for improvement. In literacy and mathematics, the coaches discuss student grades with teachers in one-on-one meetings. Teachers appreciate this. However, apart from DRA, no other diagnostic instruments are currently used. The school plans to use Read 180 when they have sufficient budget.

At present, the school does not analyze its data in relation to ethnicity or gender. As a new school, it does not yet have a school report card and, as such, does not have ready access to comparative data for similar or City schools. In addition, it only has one previous year of its own data so is unable to do a comparison of its own performance over time.

The school collects very useful qualitative data on the classroom learning environments and this is used to bring about improvements in learning for students. Every two weeks the principal, assistant principal, literacy and mathematics coaches go on learning walks to see for themselves what is happening throughout the school. After this, well-focused feedback is provided to teachers. Key aspects for special scrutiny are identified on each walk, so that overall feedback can be given, as well as individual feedback where appropriate. Data on teacher performance is also rigorously collected by the cabinet. It is used to inform the professional development program and to improve teaching and learning.

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.

When the school opened in September 2005, there were pressing needs and priorities, especially student behavior, absence and tardiness. The school set itself and individual students clear goals and objectives in relation to these issues. Since setting these goals there has been a marked and dramatic change for the better. Students’ attitudes to learning have been transformed and the majority of students now work attentively in class.

High expectations are communicated to students and parents. Helpful letters are sent home to parents at the midpoint of each quarter telling them of any under-performance of their children. This gives time for the parents to encourage their children to complete missing assignments or to work more assiduously before the report card is issued. An experienced parent coordinator has recently been hired and there is clear evidence of impact on parental involvement.

At present, only students in grade 8 achieving a level 1 have a personal intervention plan. It is planned to extend the use of these plans to all held over students, students in grade 6 who achieved level 1 and students in grade 7 who achieved levels 1 or 2. In time it is expected to extend the use of personal intervention plans to all students in receipt of academic intervention services.

The students identified as in most need of support in literacy are pulled out of their regular classes for small group intervention for three periods a week by a member of the academic intervention services team. At present, the pull-out strategy only applies in literacy and this does not address the needs for those who struggle in mathematics.

At present, goals are not set for students individually in terms of what they need to know or be able to do to progress to the next stage of learning. This cannot be achieved easily or quickly but this is worthwhile and necessary to ensure all students are challenged.

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

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The curriculum is broad and balanced in most respects, and is enriched by community involvement. Last year students were surveyed and a range of ‘talent explorations’ was

put in place to enhance the curriculum, based on the data from this research. At present, there is little use of data to differentiate learning so that all students are given work with the right degree of challenge and which builds incrementally on what they already know, understand and can do.

The use of the budget, staff organization and scheduling are done with reference to the school's goals and priorities, which have been based on the little data that was available about students' achievement. Support to students in need has been a priority for spending, and is beginning to have a positive impact on students' behavior and attitudes to learning.

During class time, the corridors of the school are patrolled by teachers' aides who challenge any student found out of class. They also patrol in the street after school and monitor student behavior, discourage disorder and intervene in any student disputes. As a result, students now conduct themselves in lessons and about the school in an orderly manner. Students are generally attentive in class and want to learn. This change in school climate is a significant improvement on last academic year and the school is to be congratulated on its achievement.

There are very effective measures to encourage good attendance and the principal monitors attendance daily. For example, students achieving 100% attendance are publicly recognized and receive prizes, such as a ticket to a ball game or movie. Students who arrive late are seen by the parent coordinator before they go to class and those who have a pattern of absence are seen with their parents by the guidance counselor. The attendance teacher visits the home in more serious cases. As a result, attendance has risen from last year's average of 88.6% to a current figure of 89.1%.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient with some well developed features.

The principal provides strong, determined and effective leadership. Parents, students and teachers greatly respect her energy and commitment and share her focused vision for the school. Students respond to her firm but supportive and encouraging approach. The cabinet works hard to ensure that the school has a strong capacity for growth and development. Management systems are in place and the school runs smoothly.

In just over a year of operation, the school has had major staffing changes. At the start of its second year of operation eight out of 16 teachers were new to the school and two are new to teaching. In addition, a new assistant principal joined the school and a dean was appointed. A parent coordinator and guidance counselor were also hired. Staff were selected, when possible, on their commitment to students and on having high expectations of students in terms of learning and achievement. In a short time, the team has been built and is working effectively. The school's concise vision statement makes the expectations very clear.

Professional development is given the highest priority and is of high quality. The cabinet is also the professional development committee, an indication of how seriously professional development is addressed. It takes many forms: individualized support from the two coaches is well done and very much appreciated; staff conferences are held on a variety of appropriate topics; visits are arranged by the principal for staff to other schools which demonstrate good practice. A major component of professional development is the

ongoing series of regular bi-monthly 'Saturday Institutes'. Although attendance has to be voluntary, staff are paid to attend, and most do so.

The principal and assistant principal formally observe all teachers on a regular basis. Written feedback is provided. In addition, the two coaches also observe teaching in their subject areas and give helpful oral feedback, backed up with a letter detailing strengths and areas for development. This is having an impact on the quality of instruction in the school, but it is too soon to be seen in students' results in tests.

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 undeveloped.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is a full and comprehensive document. It focuses on a number of key goals and objectives across the curriculum as well as in other areas, such as increasing parental involvement. The plan was the result of collaboration with the then school leadership team, working with the staff. A large proportion of the staff arrived at the school after the plan was written and the administration has already taken steps to involve these new teachers in the review and monitoring of the plan.

For those students receiving academic intervention services support, there are developing personal intervention plans in literacy, but these could be extended to more students and include learning goals for mathematics as well as literacy in appropriate cases. There is a need to include more diagnostic testing to assist teachers with the task of identifying where a student's particular difficulties lie and how they might best be addressed.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Elijah G. Stroud Middle School (MS 353)	∅	✓	+
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		