



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Wright Brothers School

Public School 028

**475 West 155th Street
New York
NY 10032**

Principal: Elsa Nunez

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Reviewer: Roy Storrs

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Wright Brothers School is a large elementary school with 1,259 students enrolled from pre-kindergarten to grade 5. The school population comprises 78% Hispanic students, 18% Black, 2% White, 1% Asian/Pacific Islander and 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan. A third of the students are English language learners with Spanish as the predominant first language. The number of special education learners is low at three percent.

The school is Title 1 eligible with 91% of students qualifying. This is above the average for similar schools and City schools. There are slightly more male than female students. At 91.5%, attendance is slightly lower than similar and City schools averages.

The school is accommodated in a spacious self-contained building which is in good order. At 120% utilization, the school's capacity is stretched. Thoughtful scheduling ensures best use of the building, but does not resolve the lack of specialist accommodation for art and science. Seven classrooms are accommodated by pre-kindergarten to grade 4 students in the Hamilton Heights Academy. These classes have their own philosophy, but remain part of the school as a whole.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The reflective principal is an exceptional leader who delegates effectively.
- All members of the school community respect the principal and support her high expectations.
- The cohesive administration and cabinet work in unison with the principal to move the school forward.
- The collegial faculty has created an orderly, student-centered and nurturing culture.
- An effective focus on data and monitoring underpins the work of the school.
- The school successfully addresses the needs of its English language learner students and has improved their performance.
- The extensive professional development program effectively enhances teachers' skills.
- Clear systems and attention to detail ensure the school runs smoothly and efficiently.
- The outstanding library and well-organized book rooms provide exceptional support for teachers and students.
- The school enjoys the strong support of the parents.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the use of data to identify and promote the talents of high achieving students and to compare progress over time.
- Build on the successful examples of lively, differentiated teaching to ensure students are engaged and motivated to learn in all lessons.
- Extend the range of enrichment activities to broaden the curriculum

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

In her three years in post, the principal has made a significant difference to this school. Through her exceptional leadership the school's operation matches its motto of 'Aim for the sky'. The school's high aspirations extend to its day-to-day functioning, which is smooth and efficient. The principal trusts her staff and gives them the resources to do their job well. With such a large school to manage she has delegated responsibility astutely to her four assistant principals and cabinet whom she accurately describes as her 'dream team'. Delegation extends further to include the whole faculty, each member of which has a role in setting and monitoring the school's goals through a range of operational teams. The administration's strong and consistent emphasis on data and monitoring has succeeded in raising attainment generally and achieving adequate yearly progress for its English language learners. An extensive professional development program plays a crucial role, being directed at improving instruction, and establishing the school as a learning community.

Throughout the school the staff has created a sense of purpose and a demonstrable culture directed at nurturing the growth of all its students. The students relate well to their teachers and enjoy school. Their parents play significant leadership and supportive roles in the life of the school.

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 administration collects and organizes meticulously all available data, which is carefully analyzed. Standardized test data is supplemented by diagnostic tests and informative, internally-generated assessments. Much of the data collected is on literacy and mathematics. Students' reading levels are tested monthly and teachers keep work folders of writing. Detailed notes follow regular conferencing to assess reading and writing in the classroom context. A similarly consistent approach applies to mathematics. Baseline tests are followed by regular interim assessments, which depict students' mathematical understanding item by item. These assessments enable teachers to spot students' weaknesses and to target support accordingly.

The main concern is to raise the achievement of students performing at levels 1 and 2 in their grade and in danger of being held back. So, the principal's central data files focus strongly on these students. Another key group is the high proportion of Spanish speaking students, some of whom inevitably perform at levels 1 and 2. The diligent bilingual coordinator collects and analyzes copious data for all bilingual students, regardless of their level of performance. The progress of these English language learners is checked frequently to gauge their acquisition of skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Equally precise data is kept on the few special education students who subsequently receive the support they need to meet the goals of their individual education plans.

The above thorough diagnostic procedures provide on-going data, such that the principal is able to track the progress of every student at whatever level and thus gains a picture of the achievement of each class and grade. Importantly, they guide the school's allocation of students to appropriate classes or to the very useful intervention. The school has a determined approach to using data, but at present it does not go far enough in comparing its performance over time and in relation to similar 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 school has an inclusive culture in which every child matters regardless of their home language or achievement level. The vibrant, collaborative approach to planning and goal setting across the school reflects this culture. The myriad of data collected and analyzed gives the principal a good picture of how well the school is performing. The principal has an open style of management and shares everything with the staff. Thus, teachers are intimately involved and committed, ensuring data informs planning, goal setting and decision making at all levels. The cabinet sets a good working model, which is emulated by grade and subject teams involving every teacher. Results of their separate labors feed into the school leadership team's deliberations, culminating in the school's well-produced and clearly expressed Comprehensive Education Plan. This provides the big picture and is the working document for all members of the school community. While the needs of most students are effectively met through this process, data analysis is not yet used with sufficient accuracy to identify and promote the talents of all high achieving students.

The school's strong involvement with the Teachers' College 'labsite' approach has been especially beneficial. Learning from a college tutor, teachers are becoming competent in observation and conferencing techniques. These valuable assessment instruments have helped individual teachers and informed discussions leading to new goals being set to improve reading and writing. The school has effectual systems to support students most in need. An example of this success is the excellent provision for English language learners whose improved achievement this year has resulted in them making adequate yearly progress.

The active parents association and the conscientious parent coordinator work tirelessly to engage parents in their children's education. They provide detailed information in a variety of forms and organize numerous well-attended events. Parents appreciate the principal and staff being so approachable and recognize how well the school cares for their children.

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.

In her mission to drive up achievement, the principal has rightly emphasized literacy and mathematics which are effectively promoted by coaches and lead teachers. The impact is that students make encouraging progress in these basics. Science and social studies are given due attention and students experience art and music. The lack of facilities, however, limits the range of enrichment activities within the curriculum. This deficiency is addressed to some extent by a number of after school clubs.

The collegial faculty recognizes it's accountable for students' progress and has created an orderly, student-centered and nurturing culture. Within this scenario, teacher accountability begins with clear expectations based on 'bottom lines' stated in the staff handbook and Comprehensive Education Plan. Adherence to these is checked rigorously by clearly-focused walkthroughs involving principal, staff and parents. The principal also meets regularly with teachers to check their data. Coaches and staff developers are then on hand to fill any gaps revealed by these processes. Lively, differentiated group instruction in literacy effectively engages students, but is less well developed in other subjects. Budgeting and staffing are top priorities for the principal. The outstanding library and well-organized book rooms, which provide such exceptional support for teachers and students, are evidence of this. Decisions are based entirely on need, as exemplified by the way the staff is carefully deployed to make optimum use of their skills. In spite of large numbers and limited space it is a credit to the school that resourceful scheduling successfully meets the needs of teachers and students.

The principal sets a fine example in her respect of staff, students and parents. This attitude is reflected across the school, so students feel respected and supported. Good attendance is seen as a priority because of its link with student progress. It is pursued relentlessly by the attendance teacher, with good support from all staff.

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

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal does all she can to ensure new staff are flexible, thinking people who know how to use data and yet show a human side. Working with new and existing staff she has established a professional, hard-working faculty. Attention given to on-going professional development is paramount and ensures that teachers' skills are constantly being refined. The extensive program ideally balances whole school, group and individual training events held in school or outside venues. A particular strength is the establishment of cross-grade study groups. These provide invaluable opportunities for discussing and making considered decisions, for instance about how best to teach specific concepts such as place value in mathematics. The result of all these activities is that the school is a true learning community. The principal and assistant principals observe all teachers formally and through regular learning walks with other teachers. Observations lead to one-to-one debriefings and the publication of summary findings which might help all teachers.

Teachers appreciate these procedures especially as their active involvement enables them to gain from observing other colleagues' approaches to instruction.

The reflective principal is an exceptional leader who recognizes the value of involving everyone in planning and evaluating the school's work. She delegates effectively and has teamwork at the heart of her philosophy, as it ensures everyone is working towards the same goals. Teachers say that their involvement has quadrupled since the principals' appointment and the positive impact upon morale and collegiality is noticeable. Accordingly, the principal has earned the respect and admiration of all members of the school community who solidly support her drive for high standards in all aspects of school life. This extends to the clear systems and procedures and close attention to detail which ensure the school runs smoothly and efficiently. The school reaches out to numerous outside professional organizations, community groups and support services from which students and faculty benefit.

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.

Rigorous monitoring is one of the school's great strengths and is a cyclical process integrally allied to professional development. To ensure that monitoring has impact, the principal has instituted a range of transparent interlinked procedures. At the heart of these are the purposeful team meetings at grade, cabinet and administration levels. Teams have clear functions which they pursue diligently. The process starts with the school leadership team analyzing the previous year's results to set new goals. Their deliberations filter to other teams that set their sub-goals, which they evaluate periodically, making adjustments as necessary. At a day-to-day operational level class teachers collect and make good use of test data. Individually and in collaboration with their grade colleagues they use baseline information to set their goals and determine the next steps. Throughout the term they regularly track the progress of individual students and groups through diagnostic tests, observations and one-to-one conferencing. Teachers are becoming increasingly skilled at this form of monitoring. The impact of these thorough procedures is that teachers are kept constantly aware of their students' attainments and the progress they are making.

The cohesive administration and cabinet, which the principal aptly calls her 'A' and 'Dream' teams, work in harmony to move the school forward. They are inextricably involved in monitoring and meet weekly to review progress, to set new plans and to unify their activities. In order to monitor instruction constantly, a novel initiative is that each cabinet member has adopted a teacher whom they visit regularly. In addition, vital parts of monitoring are learning walks which focus upon a particular issue, such as instruction in writing. These are conducted by the principal accompanied by assistant principals, coaches, team coordinators, teachers or parents, depending upon the focus. They provide invaluable information, which is documented in detail and may trigger realignment of practices, professional development or a revision of plans. Through these effective monitoring procedures the administration demonstrates its constant determination to 'aim for the sky'.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Wright Brothers School (PS 028)	∅	✓	+
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