



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Robert Simon School

Public School 064

**600 East 6 Street
New York
NY 10009**

Principal: Sandra Litrico

Dates of review: March 28 – 29, 2007

Reviewer: Peter Williman

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Robert Simon School is a small elementary school serving 291 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The student population represents 67% Hispanic students, 26% Black students, 5% Asian and other students and 2% White students. Twenty percent are special education students and 8% are English language learners. Attendance recorded on the 2005 school report card was at an average of 90.4%, which was in line with similar schools but below that of City schools. The school receives Title 1 funding for 100% of students.

The school was accepted for empowerment status in 2006. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their own school community. The school shares a building with two other schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a highly motivated leader who uses her high expectations and commitment to drive the welfare and achievement of her students.
- The school collects a comprehensive range of data and uses it very effectively to understand the progress of students.
- Members of the administration, the cabinet and the pupil personnel team carry out their individual and collective responsibilities to a high standard.
- Grade teams use data from State and school generated tests, rubrics and their own records very effectively to inform the next steps in learning.
- Students enjoy school and are very effectively engaged in their lessons as a result of the quality of instruction and the curriculum they receive both during and after school.
- The school revises curriculum flexibly through the careful selection of new programs and strategies.
- Teachers know their students well and use a range of strategies to individualize learning, to encourage collaborative learning and to raise student awareness of their next steps.
- Formal and informal professional development is well tailored to meet the needs of individual teachers and of school development plans.
- The school uses data and resources very effectively to provide high quality services for special education students.
- The school is a caring community, which fosters open communication with parents, provides support to family welfare and promotes understanding of the learning processes.

What the school needs to improve

- Use the school's very good data more proactively to identify achievable, objectively measurable targets for students, classes and grades.
- Specify the goals, timeframes and monitoring within the comprehensive education plan with greater clarity.
- Use data more precisely to identify and change factors of instruction, content and schedules.
- Share the best practice in instruction to develop further the consistency, range and quality of differentiation.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The Robert Simon School is very well led, has high expectations and is a very cohesive and focused school. Above all the leadership is honest and accurate in their self-evaluation of the strengths and needs of the school. The school is, therefore, secure in its capacity to move forward based on very sound data analysis and a knowledgeable, regenerative team. Leadership and faculty use a very strong foundation of data to understand students' progress very well. Developments in data management give clear indications of the quality and pace of that progress. Data is used well to guide goal setting, instruction and logistical decisions at school, grade, class and student levels. Students are increasingly involved in understanding their success and next steps. As a result student achievement has risen steadily over the past years. The challenge for the school is to use its good data resources to set achievement targets more proactively, to refine instruction through further differentiation and to adjust longer term planning in response to data in order to raise student achievement further.

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 principal, cabinet and faculty have a consistent and very good knowledge of student progress as a result of monitoring a comprehensive range of City, State and school generated assessments. Teachers use data from conferences with students, close observation and program assessments very well to maintain an ongoing formative understanding of progress. This is very effectively augmented by summative periodic test data. Item analysis from the Princeton Review and other well-matched assessments indicates students' grasp of learning. The cabinet, which comprises the administration, coaches and intervention coordinator, efficiently analyze periodic assessment data and overview faculty data to monitor the progress of all students. The thoroughness and regularity of this process are strengths of the leadership and as a result, their understanding and the decisions they make for students are founded on substantial formative and summative data.

The school focuses monitoring particularly well on all students whose progress is in greatest need of improvement. Consequently, special education students, English language learners and lower achieving groups are targeted for close observation. The intervention coordinator uses her specific interest in data to review the progress of students in greatest need of improvement very well. Equally, the cabinet tracks students who require focused support to achieve higher standard levels. The comparative progress of students in all groupings, including by gender and ethnic group remains under constant review. The principal and cabinet regularly use data very effectively to measure the quality of progress and performance of students within and across grades over time. Coaches have particularly good knowledge of levels and progress within their subjects. The

principal benchmarks whole school progress using internal and external comparative data. Wider comparisons are enhanced through visits to 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.

Day to day, individual teachers and grade teams use the good knowledge from their records to plan students next steps in learning very effectively. They are well supported in these decisions by coaches who consistently raise the bar to challenge and improve instruction. Prominence is given to support learning for students where assessment indicates a need. As a result of well structured instruction almost all students continue to improve. Well coordinated services by the intervention team and the pupil personnel team set specific objectives for their identified students and these students make significant progress as a result.

At leadership level the principal and cabinet are well aware of the specific goals that need to be met in order to further significant rises in student achievement. Consequently, the effective strategy of ‘Understanding by Design’ has been introduced and this is helping faculty to be more objective in planning. Within subjects and across grades good quality plans target improvements in instruction based upon those aspects which have been most challenging to students and which have hindered raising achievement. For example, in mathematics, students find problem solving difficult and as a result the coach works with teachers on the presentation of underlying concepts. Similarly, because students demonstrate they cannot write ‘on demand’ in their literacy tests this skill is being developed through scaffolded practice in lessons. Judgment of achievement of goals currently relies upon qualitative ongoing data and summative assessments. Whole school goals are not yet planned within a context of tight timeframes and demanding targets for students, classes and grades in order to monitor and evaluate the degree of school progress towards them. This is a weakness in what otherwise is a well focused planning process as the school’s recent history demonstrates.

High expectations in this school are firmly founded on preparing students to care. This is fundamental to their learning. As a result students respect each other, their teachers and above all they care about the quality of their work. Behavior in class is mostly exemplary. Reading programs, charts, conferences, rubrics and personal journals give students good self-knowledge of their stage of learning. Parents value the contact and detailed information faculty and the school provide. They feel engaged in their children’s experience through the ‘open door’ policy. Parent and student commitment with the well integrated and cohesive staff enables PS 64 to focus very well on its goals and purposes.

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 mandated curriculum is assured through the good quality and range of programs. The principal with her cabinet maintains a close overview to ensure that the explicit curriculum

of programs and the implicit curriculum of instruction are delivering the required content, knowledge and skills effectively. This is demonstrated both through assessments which are integral to individual programs, and school-wide assessments.

The school's good protocols and assessment procedures, combined with the ongoing scrutiny of students' work and instruction creates positive professional attitudes across faculty. This ensures ongoing accountability for improvement. Faculty plan and implement differentiation well through the 'workshop' model of instruction. In the best practice the level of challenge to students is effectively varied in independent work by specific task, complexity of work, pace and level of support, which engages them extremely well.

The principal, with her assistant principal, bases budgetary and logistical decisions very effectively upon goals and assessment of school needs. Funding of a full time mathematics coach has strengthened the cabinet and has raised faculty instructional levels. An additional teacher now manages individualized education plans to focus on achieving goals. Purchases of book selections, based on student feedback to coaches, provide challenge and inspiration to students' reading habits.

Students' attention and enjoyment of lessons is a tribute to the good match of programs to meet their needs. Equally, teachers through their differentiation, work hard to make lessons effective for each student. Teachers and staff know their students well and there is a mutual respect which gives students confidence to share their problems appropriately.

There are a number of factors, which are beyond the school's control, that contribute to attendance, such as student mobility. However, although the average attendance at 90.4% is below the City average but in line with similar school averages, the school has good protocols and procedures to act immediately upon absence or lateness. Students track their personal class attendance with enthusiasm when incentives, such as a pizza party, are provided.

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.

Since the school has experienced significant changes of staff, partly through promotions, the quality of teachers' alignment with school goals and their good management of school assessment procedures is a tribute to the principal's effective hiring procedures. Teachers in all grades use their records and relevant assessments appropriately. The cabinet is very knowledgeable of data management and analysis and this is clearly demonstrated in the quality of their meetings. As a result this school's decision making is firmly data driven.

Professional development is well managed to build staff capacity. As new assessments and new school developments have come on line, professional development has been put in place to successfully prepare staff to manage the outcomes. This is an ongoing process in which teachers are up to speed and expanding their skills continuously, with for example the Princeton Review program. Teachers in early grades now use palm computers to record one significant assessment, the results of which are demonstrated in graphic printouts of student progress. Professional development is intrinsic to weekly routine. Teachers value the input of their peers, of staff trainers, of coaches and of intervention teachers. The positive outcomes are seen in the good collaborative instruction, sharing of practice and the coherence of instruction across the school.

The principal is well respected throughout the school for her strong leadership and her ability to have put the school in its present positive position. She retains the drive, critical reflection and capacity to continue that momentum. Her clear vision is matched by high expectations, very good personal relations, ability to see opportunities and ability to structure organization to purpose. She knows the work of her teachers well. She assesses instructional qualities with clear perception and provides constructive feedback from formal and informal observations. Teachers in collaborative classes share their practice well. The use of lab sites, modelling of lessons and some visits to other schools broaden the base of instructional knowledge. The small size of the school and the good quality of leadership results in very good communication within and between teams and as a result the school runs very smoothly. Data is easily shared and evaluation of results leads to flexible responses to planning and instruction at class, grade and school levels.

Partnerships with external organizations are well focused to meet the needs of the school's particular community. Therefore the school works well with the parents association, with organizations such as Educational Alliance, the Go Project, New York Cares and Partnership with Children, which support students and families with additional services.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school's schedule of assessments is well used to judge the progress of all students, and, more implicitly, the progress of the school towards planned improvements. Plans include expected outcomes but these are often not quantifiable against predetermined objectives or targets to measure progress effectively. Indicators of success are not often stated in terms of specific outcomes for students. Checks may be made, for example, that assessment processes are in place in line with a goal, but not that they have had an impact on students. Assessments are not yet purposely integrated into planning to provide interim and final benchmarks of progress. Consequently there is insufficient correlation between the two systems.

The principal, cabinet and faculty use the school schedule of periodic testing appropriately to compare progress of students, classes and their respective goals. The leadership is very responsive to data indicators to realign plans flexibly, as in changing number goals for grade 4 to bring student progress into line with expectations. Groupings for the extended day are frequently changed to match students to the appropriate program. The cabinet consistently reviews adjustments to longer-term succession planning as a result of changed circumstances. In response to the change in State assessments the mapping of curriculum and expectation of instructional priorities is undergoing intensive review to ensure achievement continues to rise.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Robert Simon School (PS 64)	∅	✓	+
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	