



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Liberty School

Public School 89

**201 Warren Street
New York
NY 10282**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 89 is a modern elementary school in Lower Manhattan in New York City. It has 515 students enrolled from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The student body is ethnically diverse, with most students residing in the neighborhood. Of the student population, 56% are White, 22% are Asian, 14% are Hispanic, and 8% are Black. Although the proportion of English language learners at 4% is lower than similar and City schools, there is a higher proportion of students newly arrived in the country than in most other City schools.

At 94%, the attendance rate is about the same as the City average. The school is not eligible to receive Title I funds.

The proportion of special education students is 18%, which is higher than similar and City schools. The school is a model site for a special education inclusion collaborative team teaching program.

The school shares building space with an intermediate school. Since the school has demonstrated success as measured by student achievement on standardized tests, it is one of the schools that is exempt from following some of the curriculum mandates issued by the New York City Board of Education and has the autonomy to design and implement its own programs.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school successfully charts the progress of each student and uses the data effectively to tailor instruction.
- The school focuses on students in the lower grades and new arrivals to the school to intervene early at the first signs of academic difficulty.
- Teachers plan instruction around themes and develop culminating activities that engage students' interests and enable them to demonstrate what they know in creative ways.
- Students are given tools for monitoring their own progress and so know what to do if they are to reach the next level.
- Teachers use open-ended questions well to help students apply concepts and think more deeply.
- Great collaboration between academic intervention specialists and regular classroom teachers results in a well-coordinated plan of intervention.
- The school celebrates authentic student work, placing it on display in classrooms and hallways.
- The school's model collaborative team teaching program provides professional learning opportunities for both special education and general education teachers to enhance their skills of modifying instruction to meet individual student needs.
- The school is a welcoming place where teams work and learn collaboratively, resulting in a high degree of teacher, student and parent satisfaction.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a system for improving the monitoring of activities occurring during grade-level meetings.
- Provide more training in giving direct reading assessments and analyzing the resulting data.
- Find time for the principal to visit classes and grade meetings more regularly and frequently.
- Ensure teachers use the time in grade meetings to share successful practices, and build on their beliefs that they are a good source of professional development.
- Find ways for students to build confidence to talk to at least one adult on a regular basis about personal concerns.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The school's curriculum, its processes for gathering and using data, and its strategies for interventions and documentation of student progress reflect the school's attention to teaching and learning as its top priority. The hallways and classrooms are adorned with student work and help create the attractive learning environment and pride in achievement. A program designed to foster student respect for each other and the example set by adults who collaborate as colleagues have resulted in a peaceful school climate that is safe and nurturing.

All phases of the school's planning are intentionally designed and well coordinated. Consequently, programs are fully responsive and developmentally appropriate to students' needs while encouraging challenge for them all to reach higher levels of academic achievement.

Students' high scores on standardized tests exemplify the extent to which the school has been able to cultivate and sustain student motivation for learning. Staff, students and parents express pride in being part of the school and see themselves as key contributors to its ongoing success. They support the principal enthusiastically, voicing their confidence in her ability to lead effectively and bring about positive changes.

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.

In addition to analyzing the data from City and State standardized tests, school staff successfully generate their own data through end-of-unit and various diagnostic tests to gain a clear understanding of every student's performance and progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The school uses its data to compare itself to other similar schools and City schools and with its own past performance as a school and across all grades and classes. It looks closely at data to ensure any trends in the performance and progress of different groups, including for ethnicity and gender, are picked up early. Such attention to progress and early interventions has resulted in the school making steady gains in the percentages of students moving up a level each year.

Progress is measured closely to make sure students make the gains they should to reach the challenging goals set for them by the school. All teachers are conscientious in collecting data and in using it to inform them of the steps they must take to build individual students' growth. Each teacher has a folder for each student, containing monthly progress charts of reading levels and a goal sheet for and a variety of class grids and check-lists for phonics, spelling and mathematics. Progress in mathematics, reading and spelling is gauged against timelines and through the use of running records and conference notes. Data from Early Childhood Language Assessment System documents students' growth in pre-kindergarten through grade 2 and is used as a basis to chart progress and set goals in

older grades. The information is sent from class to class so that teachers can assess the information for all children as they progress from grade to grade. As a result, more students are reaching Levels 3 and 4 in State tests.

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’s goals are clearly set out in its documentation and contain objective measures, based on the outcomes of data analysis, to evaluate progress. Data is used as a focus for goal-setting and writing action plans for individuals and groups of students by class, grade and subject at instructional team meetings. Regular conversations between teachers and students about their work end with new goals being agreed and set. This process enables students to play an active role in assessment and helps them know independently what they have to improve if they are to move up a level.

Good focus is given to students most in need of improvement. Students are selected for intervention services depending upon the need to accelerate their progress. Parents receive weekly updates about their children’s progress and are able to contact teachers by email or in person at other times if they wish. Detailed assessment data is used to inform decisions about the type and duration of intervention services from the academic intervention specialists and from classroom teachers during the extended day programs.

Parents are fully involved in their children’s education. Goals and expectations are shared at informational meetings. In addition, the school has designed an exemplary report card describing in great detail the students’ achievements and goals. Parents who were interviewed marveled at the level of preciseness with which teachers describe children’s progress and personality traits. They appreciate a school-generated report card that facilitates such personalized documentation of student progress.

Students are aware of the high expectations set for them through the many conversations between students and teachers regarding their academic progress and during lessons. When writing down the next goal, teachers always discuss with students how they can reach it. Classrooms have excellent charts reminding students how to be proficient in selecting work that is appropriately challenging. For instance, as most classrooms have libraries with books color-coded to designate levels of difficulty, there are reminders for students about how to choose a ‘just-right’ book.

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 aligns its instructional activities to support a curriculum that fosters student inquiry, builds on students’ interests, connects to the real world and helps students understand that there are multiple ways of demonstrating their understanding of concepts learned. Curriculum maps highlight the sequence for instructional planning. Intensive planning has resulted in lessons with interdisciplinary themes, with hallways full of displays

of big culminating projects. For example, a project on parks incorporated learning and the development of skills in science, mathematics, English and history.

Teachers are fully accountable for the academic growth of all students and understand how assessment drives instruction. The school's leadership gives clear guidance in differentiated instruction to all classroom teachers. With the help of a special education consultant assigned to the school, all teachers have received expert guidance in how to alter their instructional practice to accommodate students' different learning styles and all levels of achievement.

Data is compiled and analyzed to serve as the springboard for budgeting, scheduling, and staffing decisions. For instance, the principal budgeted for a second literacy coach for the upper grades when data revealed that one coach was insufficient. As the collaborative team teaching program grew, the school decided to budget for a special education coach who could focus on giving more subject specific support in these classrooms.

While students express excitement about the extent to which they get to do fun projects and engage in activity-driven classrooms, not all students are confident to talk to and feel able to trust at least one adult well. Activities are inquiry-based and this ensures students are challenged to think through work for themselves and to solve problems independently first before asking an adult for help.

Students, staff and parents are clear about attendance criteria and policies. All those asked knew that absence notes are required if a student is absent, and that prolonged absences trigger a phone call home. Most absences are caused by illness. Some students are periodically absent when they accompany parents on business trips or go to visit relatives abroad. When the school has advanced notice of these types of extended absences, teachers give students packets of work so they can keep up with their studies.

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.

Having been in existence for fewer than ten years, the school is led by the original principal who was instrumental in the conceptualization of the school's programs. The principal makes certain that the staff who apply to work at the school have the willingness and capacity to blend in with a school culture where high expectations for all students pervade every aspect of school planning. The principal is confident that her approach to hiring has resulted and will continue to result in a first-rate teaching staff whose drive, focus and commitment bode well for continuous school progress measured first and foremost by high levels of student achievement. Staff members are selected after demonstrating that they can support the school's mission of creating a community of successful, active learners.

Teachers frequently attend professional development opportunities outside of school and give detailed feedback to other teachers on their return. Teachers are reflective of their practice, share strategies and take pride in being able to turn to their colleagues for assistance. For this reason, staff expressed their disappointment that teacher-led workshops where in-house experts were able to present and share their professional knowledge and skills were no longer taking place.

The principal observes classrooms as frequently as she can despite her increasing administrative load. She has made fewer personal observations of the activities occurring within grade level meetings in recent months. According to staff, the nature of the grade level meetings has changed and the time is being used more frequently for day-to-day management issues, and less on inspiring inquiry and dialog about teacher practice.

The staff hold the principal in such high regard. They are committed to cooperate as teams to do what is necessary to support her vision for a child-centered environment. Therefore, staff engage in a team approach to sharing information, analyzing data, and tailoring plans of action for the individual child. For example, the pupil personnel team consisting of the principal, counselor, speech therapist, school psychologist and academic intervention specialists meet weekly to discuss at-risk children and make decisions about services vital to support their learning needs and ensure their success.

The school has a considerable number of effective partnerships to help to reach its goals. The work of staff from the academic intervention team ensures that intervention is put into place quickly. As a result, any student who needs extra help to learn, either all of the time or for short lengths of time on a particular skill or piece of learning are targeted effectively. Partnership with parents is very strong and the large number of workshops and events organized by the parent teacher association benefit student learning considerably.

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.

The school monitors every aspect of its work closely to build a secure picture of its overall effectiveness. Regular, mostly well-focused meetings with all members of the school community focus discussions on the school's goals. The success of these is measured against student progress as shown by data in the school's comprehensive assessment systems. The school documents what has worked well in meeting these types of goals and engages in reflective practice to be aware of how to make improvements and mid-course corrections as needed. The school's system for review is fully established and each year's goals and review lead naturally to the next set of goals and related action planning.

The data is collected in a logical way and made public to all concerned to enable a full review of practices within and across grades. As a result, there is a coordinated approach to bringing about positive improvements. Students' progress is compared to make sure that everyone is making the progress they should and the information used by the school to target, adapt and refine programs and interventions. Goals are realigned as appropriate.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Liberty School (PS 89)	∅	✓	+
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