



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Adam Clayton Powell Junior Elementary School

Public School 153

**1750 Amsterdam Avenue
New York
NY 10031**

Principal: Monica George-Fields

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Reviewer: Keith Edwards

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Adam Clayton Powell Junior Elementary School accepts students from pre-kindergarten through to grade 5. There are currently 1049 students enrolled. Each year student numbers remain relatively stable. Hispanic students (70%) and Black students (30%) make up the majority of the school population. The school building has been developed to provide extensive internal accommodation but at the expense of outdoor recreational facilities. Ninety percent of the students are Title 1 eligible which is above the City average. Furthermore, the school has an increasing percentage of students recently arrived to the country. They form approximately 10% of the school population. Almost half of the students in the whole school are English language learners.

The school has 61 special education students. In the last academic year, attendance levels were comparable to similar schools and the City average. The school has a low incidence of suspensions. Although the school has welcomed several staff into the upper grades in the last academic year, teacher mobility is low.

Since September 2006, Adam Clayton Powell Junior Elementary School has been an empowerment school. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and her senior staff provide outstanding leadership, where they are committed to a program of continuing school improvement within a compassionate environment.
- The quality of teaching and learning, based on a secure understanding of each child's potential is outstanding.
- The school invests strongly in a program of continuing professional development to enable each member of staff to perform at his and her best.
- The curriculum is carefully designed to enable all students to achieve.
- The staff has an excellent awareness of not only the students' academic needs, but also of their personal circumstances, that might have an impact on their learning.
- Data on the students' performance is used very well in decision making at all levels to guide improvement and to inform the goals in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan.
- The students are highly motivated and thoroughly enjoy their time at school.
- The school runs a comprehensive program of enrichment activities that enable the students to develop their interests in a range of different contexts.
- The school provides a very safe environment and student behavior is excellent.
- The school has an outstanding reputation in the neighborhood and those parents who do become involved are very supportive.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to strengthen the links with parents.
- Develop partnerships with outside organizations which could provide outdoor facilities for the students.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

This is a well-developed elementary school that has the welfare and academic development of its students at the heart of its work. Over the last five years, the principal has turned the school around and through her dynamic leadership and very high expectations for herself and of all of those who work with her, the Adam Clayton Powell Junior Elementary School is flourishing. High expectations for all of its students inform all of the planning and organization of the school. The principal and her dedicated team of assistant principals have established a climate in school where the students feel safe and secure and this enables them to succeed. This is a very compassionate school that is mindful of the needs of every individual pupil. The value placed on each and every individual has boosted the students' self-awareness and self-esteem and provides an excellent foundation for high achievement. The students respond very well to the climate for learning and are highly motivated to achieve their best. Attendance levels are marginally above both the City averages and the average of similar schools.

The school is proud of its reputation in the neighborhood as “the school that never sleeps”. Relationships with parents are good and the school uses a range of avenues to work with them to support learning.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

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

The school has very effective systems for collecting data relating to the performance and progress of students. From kindergarten, tests are administered to gauge the students starting points and potential. Staff assess the performance level of each student in each grade before they start each new academic year. This information is used successfully to ensure that each class has a spread of ability and also to inform other grouping arrangements, particularly for English language learners. This works very effectively as evidenced by the fact that the results in English language arts and mathematics have improved in grades 3 to 5 year to year since the appointment of the current principal.

The school monitors very carefully the progress of different groups of students as they progress through the school. The principal takes the lead on this initiative as she has frequent conversations with her colleagues to evaluate student progress. They compare the progress of students in each subject and grade by grade to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is equally effective for all students. This information is used to identify students in greatest need of improvement and those who, with extra support and challenge, could increase their scores and move up a level. Furthermore, the senior staff monitor and analyze overall performance, ensuring that they track the achievement of all groups represented in the school. In particular, those students who are English language learners, are monitored carefully to ensure that they are achieving as well as they might.

Special education students are included in all activities that the school has to offer and the school makes a particular effort to mainstream all of these students throughout the curriculum areas. Data shows that this degree of inclusion has proved to be effective.

The principal is competitive and has high expectations of all around her. The principal is mindful of the school's standing compared to similar schools and is constantly looking for areas where improvements can be made. Variations in performance between subjects are analyzed by subject coaches. The principal is truly the chief of instruction with a very clear understanding of the uses of statistical data. She makes full use of this expertise to raise expectations and to inform much of the decision making in school.

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 use of data informs student goals, grade targets and whole school priorities. Data is used very effectively in the classroom. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their students' personal and academic development, and are driven by the desire to raise the achievement of every student. However, this expectation is very much focused on the needs of the whole child rather than just a pure academic approach. Through class discussion and individual attention, the teachers skillfully enable each student to develop the necessary skills that will form the basis of their future learning. For example, reading is taught systematically and the students have very good opportunities to share their skills with others. The pleasure that can be derived from books underpins much of the work of the school. In mathematics, the students are challenged through a practical approach to problem solving. It is the skilful use of data along side the teachers' knowledge of individual students that enhances the quality of learning.

Staff use continuous assessment alongside their excellent understanding of the students' personal circumstances to provide the most appropriate learning context. This is particularly evident in the case of special education students. Regular inter-disciplinary meetings are held to review the needs of individual students to gauge the barriers and potential aids to their learning. Much reference is made to the class binder which contains detailed information about each student's progress, their grade level and the impact of a range of intervention strategies. Behavioral and motivational issues are discussed alongside current performance data. The teachers are held accountable to have a detailed knowledge of the skills that students require to succeed in their assignments.

The students take full advantage of the additional opportunities afforded to them at the end of each school day to improve their understanding in different subjects and which help them to develop other skills in languages, music and chess for example. Furthermore, their parents are happy for their children to avail themselves of these additional, optional classes. They fully appreciate the commitment of the teachers and their drive for high standards. However, only a small percentage are actively involved in the life of the school. Some parents remain hard to reach in spite of the fact that the school has established good lines of communication with the home.

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 analysis and use of data is central to decision making in the school. Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are all firmly based on documented student needs. The principal is intelligent in her organization of the school curriculum and with the hiring of key staff to enable all students to gain confidence and to succeed. Furthermore she hires additional expertise to enrich the students’ learning opportunities and to provide continuing professional development for her staff.

The school’s curriculum is securely based on high expectations of students and the regular review of their progress. Class grouping arrangements are securely based on assessment data to ensure that there is a wide spread of ability within each class. Through their regular departmental meetings, the teachers determine the most appropriate curriculum for their students and they are willing to learn from each other. This is particularly evident in the achievements of English language learners. Assessment information is used very effectively to determine programs and intervention strategies to supplement the core curriculum to ensure that the students maintain good progress. Tasks are differentiated effectively in each class so that students are challenged but never daunted by the work that is set. This is particularly evident in reading classes where there is a fluidity of approach to ensure that each student has the opportunity to succeed.

The teachers are held accountable for their students’ progress. There are regular departmental meetings as well as grade meetings where the progress of groups and individual students are discussed. These meetings are informed by a close scrutiny of assessment data. The school leadership has an excellent understanding of where there are difficulties with the quality of teaching and responds promptly with intervention strategies. Remedial action is taken when necessary to support those students who are having difficulty at any stage of their academic development. The special education students have well defined individual education plans which are monitored carefully to ensure that their learning is broken down into measurable steps. High achieving students are identified early and given work that enables them to flourish.

Most students arrive at school punctually and are eager to stay as long as the school remains open. Attendance levels are good as the school offers a range of incentives to attend school. Standards of behavior are outstanding. In spite of the lack of outdoor facilities, the students conduct themselves with maturity and much respect for each other. Students have excellent attitudes towards learning. They concentrate in class, pay very good attention to their teachers and work at a good pace.

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 school runs like clockwork. It provides a warm and welcoming atmosphere to all who have a commitment towards education. The school has built a reputation based on high expectations, academic achievement and inclusion. It looks well beyond the confines of the community when looking for expertise to support the efficiency and effectiveness of the

school. For example, an Australian consultant (Australian and United States Services in Education) is currently supporting the school's development initiatives.

Staff stability is now excellent. The principal has established order and high expectations. Although demanding, she is very supportive of her colleagues and has established an excellent management structure that values the individual professional attributes of her colleagues. All of the staff are held accountable, but they are also trusted to exercise their professional judgment on a day-to-day basis. The school is successful in recruiting and retaining good teachers and this has been a significant factor in the school's outstanding recent record of achievement and improving grade test results.

It is clear, however, that complacency is not tolerated. Initiatives abound and the staff are eager to develop their skills and effectiveness. Professional development is firmly based on the school's ongoing drive to improve student achievement. Within the climate of compassion there is a very strong competitive edge. Much of the best professional development comes from within the school but outside providers are also used to great effect. There is a program of regular classroom monitoring to assess learning styles and regular staff discussions to evaluate the outcomes and implications of such observations. These discussions in teams, with supportive and challenging input from the coaches and assistant principals, focus extensively both on learning styles and the use of assessment data to guide instruction. These meetings also provide forums for planning interventions and revising support programs.

The principal and her team of assistants regularly observe teaching and give constructive feedback. The school embraces the concept of family and is very supportive of all of its members. This contributes significantly to the students' sense of security and ultimately to their achievement.

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.

This is key to the school's success. The principal and her senior colleagues have a deep understanding of each member of the school community. They know their strengths and areas of weakness. They take the trouble to work out how to get the best out of each member of staff and how to enable each student to succeed. The school is competitive and persistent. Through its monitoring, the school is acutely aware of its standing against other schools in the City. The school is determined, through its work that the students that it serves shall have the very best opportunities. Furthermore, the school is determined to ensure that not only does it provide the very best academic education, but also that it will secure the well rounded development of each student.

Furthermore the school has a long term strategy for continuing school improvement. The current Comprehensive Education Plan is very clear in its priorities and is very firmly anchored to statistical data. There is an inbuilt flexibility to ensure that adjustments can be made when new information becomes available and this is an underlying strength. Furthermore, each member of staff has a vested interest in the overall plan and is a willing contributor to its goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Adam Clayton Powell Junior Elementary School (PS153)	∅	✓	+
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