



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Robert E. Simon School**

**Public School 165  
234 West 109 Street  
New York  
NY 10025**

**Principal: Linda Chen**

**Dates of review: April 25 - 26, 2007**

**Reviewer: Terry Turner**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Robert E. Simon School has recently become an empowerment school and takes students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. They are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

The school has an enrollment of 612 students. Seventy-four percent of students are Title 1 eligible, which is similar to the average for City schools and lower than the average for similar schools. Just less than 7% are special education students. The majority are taught in collaborative team teaching groups and the remainder in self-contained classrooms.

Seventy-two per cent of students are Hispanic, 17% are Black, 6% are White and 4% are Asian. A very small number are from other ethnic origins. Almost 29% of students are English language learners. Students in the dual language program receive instruction in both English and Spanish. There is a gifted and talented dual language program in kindergarten through grade 5.

The level of attendance, at approximately 93%, more or less mirrors that found in similar and City schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- A substantial amount of documentary evidence supports the performance and progress of students.
- The school's sound mechanisms for data collection and analysis inform the setting of goals and targets.
- A strong sense of teamwork has been firmly established with good structures for collaborative planning.
- The curriculum is flexibly adapted to meet the needs of all students.
- The school provides good services for English language learners and special education students.
- The principal and her assistant skillfully evaluate the quality of instruction and learning.
- The program of professional development is focused on the school's priorities for improvement.
- The climate in the school is calm and purposeful and students' work is celebrated in all walkways and classrooms.
- A culture of high expectations and mutual respect is evident in all aspects of the school's work.
- The principal is highly regarded in the community and has demonstrated a strong capacity to move the school forward to its next stage of development.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop staff expertise in the analysis, interpretation and use of data to inform planning.
- Build on the good work that is being done in the dual language and collaborative teaching classrooms.
- Make even better use of assessment opportunities to identify the precise needs of individual students.
- Align more clearly essential curricular components, like Everyday Mathematics, to State standards.
- Ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of goals and targets becomes an on-going process.
- Identify programs that will provide even better support to long-term English language learners and students whose education is interrupted.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

This school is well led and managed. This is an inclusive school in which every student is made welcome. Sound systems are in place to ensure that procedures are clear and well understood. Staff work in harmony with one another and operate effectively in a variety of teams. Students are happy with their programs of study and conduct themselves in an orderly and sensible manner. The school has a calm atmosphere in which mutual respect and a willingness to help each other are second nature.

The school is beginning to make better use of the variety of data that it receives and also generates. All of the information is well documented and is easily accessible. Staff are increasingly aligning effective use of data to their professional development needs as more data becomes available.

The school has successfully implemented a number of initiatives and is fulfilling its aspiration to provide quality dual language instruction for a substantial number of students. Good services are also provided for special education students. However, while the school has high expectations for all of its students, the achievement of English language learners in the school is not as high as it should be. The school knows what it does well and is fully aware of what it needs to do to improve.

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

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

#### **This area of the school's work is proficient.**

When students enter the school, standardized test scores are used effectively to verify the level at which they are performing. Diligently kept running records then enable teachers to assess and monitor the progress of each classroom. Students' performance and progress at each grade level is established through regular meetings and is well documented.

The school is assiduous in charting the progress of English language learners and special education students through independent reading, on-demand pieces of written work and mathematics tests. However, although the common thread for all assessments in the school relates back to the State standards, there is a degree of inconsistency in the way that some teachers assess students' writing. For example, some use a number and others use descriptive words. The school is endeavoring to achieve greater consistency in assessment outcomes and is developing rubrics for each grade.

The school has appropriately identified as one of its priorities the need to monitor more stringently the progress of long-term English language learners. The performance and progress of other groups like those students who are in the greatest need of improvement or whose education is interrupted are not so well documented.

The school makes good use of the report card to compare itself with other schools in terms of academic achievement and students' well being. Due to many changes in leadership in recent years the opportunities to make comparisons with the school's past performance are limited. The school is beginning to look for trends, where these exist, and to embark on longitudinal studies that will track more effectively students' progress over longer periods of time.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

At faculty conferences staff set challenging targets for increased performance, particularly in English language arts and mathematics. Grade level teams are proactive in first identifying and then finding solutions to particular problems. For example, when it was discovered that particular students were not reading for meaning, teachers used a scaffolding technique to help them follow the story. Teachers competently adjusted and augmented their instruction when data in the form of a matrix revealed that certain topics had not been understood by a majority of students and that some students had not understood a majority of the topics. The outcomes of all meetings, the evidence to support the actions taken and the goals set are meticulously documented and recorded.

The school skilfully identifies and supports, in the most appropriate way, those students who are in greatest need. For example, data is used to determine whether a student would be best placed in a collaborative teaching group or a self-contained classroom. The goals for each student or group of students are then determined. Data is also used to set goals for English language learners, for example in reading for understanding. The school provides additional support in each classroom for one period a day so that the goals of particular students can be met.

High expectations are consistently conveyed to students and parents. This was well portrayed at a grade 2 'publishing party', which was attended by many parents. Regular newsletters home inform parents of their child's reading levels and parents are frequently provided with examples of students' work. A limited number of parents are actively involved in supporting the school's targets to improve students' performance and progress. The school is wisely seeking to involve a wider range of parents so that goals and plans can be shared throughout the school community.

**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 proficient.**

The curriculum complies with statutory requirements. The schedule is very clear and staff are well attuned to it. The curriculum incorporates a diversity of projects to support learning, for example in music and in the arts. Programming is also made for gifted and talented students. A wide range of out-of-school activities also supports learning. Small group instruction is provided before school to reinforce learning and help meet the needs of students who are in greatest need of improvement or not doing well enough. However, the school has not yet found an appropriate way of aligning the mathematics curriculum to

State standards or providing a suitable program for those students whose education is interrupted.

Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are informed by the needs arising from the analysis of data. The school has incorporated significant changes to promote the progress of English language learners, such as creating a number of dual language classes. Indications are that these are working well and are beginning to secure the desired outcomes. Appropriate programming is also made for this group of students after school in English language arts. The collaborative teaching groups are benefiting from the sensitive and skilful instruction that they receive. Staffing decisions are based on the perceived needs of the students, for example many staff are fluent in both English and Spanish.

The students display positive attitudes, behave well in all situations and enjoy their learning programs. The teachers relate well to the students, are trusted by them and ensure that learning is interesting and meaningful. They are developing techniques to differentiate their instruction in order to meet the wide range of learning needs in their classes and are held accountable for student outcomes. Teachers work hard to ensure their classrooms and surrounding areas provide a stimulating environment and resources are well organized.

Good attendance and punctuality are of paramount importance to the school and there are sound strategies to promote it, including rewards for good attendance and home contact for those who are absent.

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

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school is very circumspect in ensuring that new staff share its goals, aspirations and high expectations. For example, the school knows that it must maintain a high proportion of teachers who are fluent in at least one other language, preferably Spanish.

There is a sound program of continuing professional development that supports the schools' goals and aspirations. The principal commented that 'staff may have been using data in the past without realizing it'. There is undoubtedly a heightened awareness now amongst staff of the variety of data that is available together with its use and implications. For example, staff have used the State standards and student data in mathematics to explore how assessments could be refined and modified. The school recognizes that more use could be made of the data relating to English language learners.

There are many opportunities for staff to observe and comment on each other's practice. For example, grade leaders and coaches do some side-by-side teaching and the dual language and collaborative teaching classes constantly provide each other with valuable feedback. The principal and senior leaders also have a very perceptive understanding of the quality of teaching and learning and their feedback to teachers following both formal and informal observations is constructive and helpful. Staff also work well together in teams. For example, a group of teachers collaborated to determine what features and attributes define a stimulating and purposeful classroom environment. Another group successfully devised the code of conduct that underpins the climate in the school, and to which all subscribe.

The school is calm and orderly and procedures are well understood. The principal is highly regarded in the community and has the capacity to move the school forward to its next stage of development.

Outside bodies are routinely used to help the school to achieve its goals. For example, Columbia University provides tutors on a weekly basis and the Center for Applied Linguistics provides good support in the assessment of the dual language programs.

**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.**

Teachers have sound systems for monitoring whether students' individual goals are being met through the regular grade meetings that take place. For example, teachers devised strategies to gather more data when it was discovered that they had insufficient information on students' writing. The findings were shared first within grades and then throughout the whole school.

Students are clear about the challenging goals that they have been set, for example, in terms of progressing through the identified reading scheme. However, teachers became aware that many grade 4 students could still not follow the sequence of a story. Once again sound strategies were put in place to provide students with a better understanding of the story line.

The school carefully considered the opportunity to devise its own assessments. These take place four times a year and are providing useful data on students' performance and progress. There are sound mechanisms for ensuring that data on each student is passed on from one grade teacher to the next. At the end of the academic year teachers usefully spend their time revising and amending plans both individually and in grade teams.

The school periodically monitors progress towards the overarching goals that it knows it must achieve. Data has revealed that English language learners consistently produce test scores that are lower than the targets set for them. The school recognizes that the monitoring of performance of this particular group of students must take place at more frequent intervals, even daily.

The principal has judiciously introduced significant changes in many areas, for example encouraging teachers to use a range of data when assessing students' work and monitoring their progress. There is no shortage of exciting and well-conceived initiatives and, inevitably, certain actions have had to be prioritized. It is, therefore, understandable that it has not yet been possible to review in depth the implementation of all initiatives to drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Robert E Simon School (PS 165)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	