



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Robert L Stevenson School

Public School 183

**419 East 66 Street
New York
NY 10021**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 183, the Robert L. Stevenson School, is an elementary school located in Manhattan. The school currently serves 602 students in grades kindergarten through 5. The population is made up of 54% White, 19% Asian, 16% Hispanic and 12% Black students. About 13% of students are identified as having special needs, a proportion typically found in similar and City schools but that has increased significantly in recent years. About 11% are English language learners. The school does not receive Title I funding. Attendance is 94%, which is comparable to that for similar and City schools. As the result of a rapidly expanding student population, the school has had to deal with an increasing shortage of space.

The school has been selected as one of 332 Empowerment Schools in the City. As an Empowerment School, Robert L. Stevenson has more flexibility to make key decisions and control 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, assistant principal and coaches have been successful in maintaining high levels of instructional quality throughout the school.
- The leadership team has cultivated a dynamic professional learning community, investing heavily in staff development.
- The school has a particularly strong and successful balanced literacy program.
- The school serves an expanding population of special education students while maintaining the percentage of students performing at or above grade level.
- Teachers have a strong sense of grade-level academic expectations, and work effectively to help students meet these expectations.
- The school supplements student performance data from mandated tests with its own rich set of interim assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Classroom teachers make good use of a broad range of participation structures, thereby maximizing student engagement.
- The pupil personnel team has a sophisticated and effective process for regularly reviewing the cases of struggling students and deciding jointly on next steps.
- The school has a strong arts program, including several arts-related after-school activities, that provides additional opportunities for students to be successful.

What the school needs to improve.

- Provide for additional vertical planning by subject area, so that teachers at each grade level have a better sense of the overall curriculum.
- Continue to work on the development of performance assessments in mathematics to monitor student progress in key concepts.
- Continue to explore the use of consistent writing assessments across grade levels, so that progress in writing can be consistently tracked from one grade to the next.
- Develop a more systematic system for collecting data, setting goals and monitoring aggregate learning gains by classroom, subject, grade level and relevant subgroups.
- Extend the use of lesson study as another way of promoting reflective practice among instructional leaders, coaches and teachers.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

Robert L. Stevenson School benefits greatly from a combination of success factors. An experienced and progressive instructional leadership team which is highly-motivated, well trained and collaborative in its work meets the needs of all students effectively. A rich and multi-faceted program of professional learning promotes the continuing professional growth of all teachers. High levels of parent engagement and support for learning at home and a set of sophisticated processes for identifying and intervening with students who are at risk of not meeting grade standards ensure that a good percentage of students perform at or above grade level. The school is a 'learning community' in the deepest sense.

The school uses the designated periodic assessment materials to generate data about each student's performance and progress. As yet, the recording of this information is not systematic so as to enable teachers and instructional leaders to view subject and other data in ways that allow easier identification of classroom, grade-level and school trends.

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.

The school makes effective use of available student performance data to identify academic needs and track progress over time. In addition to data from State and City tests, the school uses a broad range of effective interim diagnostics, particularly in reading and for special education students. Teachers keep careful track of each student's reading level, and compare growth over time to established expectations. In mathematics, they use interim assessments that are built into the curriculum to chart incremental learning gains.

The school uses data provided by the State to compare the performance and progress of English language learners and special education students. In the past, the school has used this data, and its own data to explore the relative performance of different sub-groups. However, this is not currently an area of focus, with the emphasis on identifying at-risk students and tracking their performance over time, regardless of ethnic group, gender, or home language.

In addition to the formal interim assessments, teachers make excellent use of running records, conferences, daily performance tasks and other qualitative measures of student learning. There is a special interest in the use of student writing as a reflection of learning at each grade level. The school is still developing a more systematic means of analyzing this work to track progress in writing more closely from grade to grade.

As a result of this combination of formal and informal assessments, classroom teachers have a detailed understanding of each student's strengths, challenges and the necessary

next steps in the learning process. The school makes good use of data that shows how its students perform in comparison to students in similar schools. It is an active participant in a network of other Empowerment schools that work on initiatives together and that share best practices with each other on a regular basis.

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.

There is a strong commitment to helping each student move forward academically. While the ultimate goal is for all students to meet or exceed State standards, the day to day focus is on identifying where individual students are performing academically and then targeting instruction to those specific needs. Goal setting is especially pronounced in the literacy program, where the emphasis is on making sure that as many students as possible are reading independently by the end of 3rd grade. The primary emphasis is on setting goals for individual students. However, there is less emphasis on setting interim aggregate goals for group performance, including ethnic groups and English language learners, and for each class and grade. As a result, it is hard to measure progress at this level.

The principal and his instructional leadership team pay particular attention to supporting students who need the most help to learn. Weekly pupil personnel team meetings review the progress of struggling students on a case by case basis. Very effective supports include ‘push-in’ from specialist services, small-group tutoring and extended day classes. In addition, collaborative team teaching teachers meet regularly with service providers to review the progress of individual special education students.

Considerable efforts go into helping parents support their children’s learning. The school has recently instituted a system of standards-based report cards that both teachers and parents can use to benchmark student progress and identify next steps for learning. In addition the school uses a variety of forums, including regular parent workshops, to clarify its high expectations. Parent engagement is a particular strength in this school, and parents find clear channels of communication with teachers, often regularly by e-mail.

The general goal of helping each student to be as successful as possible drives the work of all members of the school community, including instructional leaders, teachers and parents. In addition, there is a special emphasis on students taking responsibility for their own learning. For example, one of the parents talked about discussing the issue of large class size with her daughter: “Don’t worry, Mom,” the daughter said, “I can handle it.”

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 has been allowed to depart from the City-mandated curriculum because of its empowerment school status. The school uses a research-based mathematics curriculum that provides an array of built-in assessments. Teachers in grades 3 through 5 are continuing to develop performance assessments to provide additional information on the

students' progress in conceptual understanding. A balanced literacy program combines phonics instruction in the early grades with a heavy focus on ongoing assessment, guided reading, leveled fiction and non-fiction, and an extensive writing curriculum. Steps to improve the documentation of the literacy curriculum and continuing work on vertical planning are underway to give teachers a clearer overview of the whole curriculum.

Classroom instruction is of a particularly high quality throughout the school, with teachers using a broad range of structures and methods to promote student engagement. Teachers are accountable for ensuring that as many students as possible meet grade standards. There has been an especially strong and successful emphasis in recent years on the use of differentiated instruction to meet the identified needs of individual students. For instance, in an activity that asked students to draw rectangles on a grid and then divide them in half in different ways, students who were still struggling with the concept of rectangles were given a grid with the rectangles already drawn to scaffold the task.. In any given classroom, teachers group students differently for different activities, including both heterogeneous and homogenous groupings. Teachers and students move fluidly between whole-group and small-group instruction based on their specific learning needs.

Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are appropriately focused on improving student outcomes, especially for students with a particular learning need. Recognizing a local need for additional special education services, the school now has a collaborative team teaching classroom (serving a mix of both special needs and general education students) at each grade level. Three of the five first grade teachers are in their first year of teaching, a conscious decision by the leadership team to rebuild the first grade team.

Teachers and instructional leaders are particularly attentive to the academic and social needs of all students, quickly identifying individuals who require additional support. As a result, students are confident to ask for help with their work and advice about any personal concerns.

There are systematic systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality. Prolonged absences trigger immediate attention.

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.

Teachers are hired for their ability to be reflective practitioners and to use a broad range of both quantitative and qualitative assessment data to understand students' evolving strengths and challenges. As a group, the faculty has a solid track record of success in helping a students to achieve well.

The leadership team is especially skilful at monitoring and mentoring teachers, and providing them with a broad range of opportunities for professional learning based on an analysis of need. Every teacher in the school, including the principal, actively participates in at least one ongoing professional development initiative and some in as many as three.

The principal is first and foremost an instructional leader. He and his staff spend much of their time in classrooms, engaged in both formal and informal observations. The emphasis is much more on coaching than on supervision. As a result, teachers feel empowered, yet well supported. Last year the coaches introduced lesson study as an important way to

underpin teachers' reflection about their practice. The high quality of instruction throughout the school is a testimony to the effectiveness of these strategies. Teachers review their lesson plans with each other and discuss student progress at weekly scheduled grade meetings. In addition, there are regularly meetings of the collaborative team teaching staff to review progress and plan for the support of individual students

The principal is a highly respected leader and especially effective change agent. His calm, collaborative, and supportive leadership style, coupled with his child-friendly manner and emphasis on the whole child, is much appreciated by the staff and students alike. Parents feel that the principal is especially approachable and communicates well with them.

The school runs very smoothly because it puts far less emphasis on rules and procedures than on students learning to regulate their own behavior and be respectful of each other and teachers. Partnerships that provide conflict resolution and peer mediation training for both staff and students are important aspects of teaching and learning.

There is a special emphasis on cultural opportunities, especially in the arts through partnerships with the National Dance Institute, Parents as Arts Partners, Wingspan Arts, and the Museum of Modern Art. These and numerous partnerships with other organizations are aligned well with the school's goals and support ongoing professional development and school improvement. Together with the empowerment school network, these partnerships substantially strengthen the school's capacity as a learning community.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan process is a collaborative effort, involving representatives of the entire community. Monitoring of student progress toward grade level goals is embedded in the daily work of the school and is particularly strong. Teachers and instructional leaders monitor students progress closely through a range of data sources including classroom assessments and observations, student work and information from standardized tests. This information is used to obtain a continuously evolving, detailed picture of which skills and concepts students have already mastered, and which remain to be taught and learned by the end of the year. Monitoring of individual progress is especially sophisticated in the collaborative team teaching classrooms.

While classroom teachers appropriately focus on the incremental learning gains of individual students, the school does not yet analyze the aggregate performance of students beyond the information provided in the annual reports on student performance provided by the State. Further, the school does not set specific and quantitative interim goals for the progress of groups of students such as classroom and grade groups. While instructional leaders have a strong qualitative sense of the relative progress of individual students by class and grade levels, gained in part through careful observation of classroom instruction and student work, they do not yet have a means of monitoring progress toward goals at the school level in a quantitative and precise way.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Robert L. Stevenson School (PS 183)	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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	