



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Public School 325
500 West 138th Street
Manhattan
NY 10031**

Principal: Gary Cruz

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Reviewer: Denis Pittman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

This is a new school, formed as the result of a re-structuring exercise which took place in 2005. It shares the campus with another school. There are 571 students from kindergarten through grade 6. Seven percent are special education students and 43% are English language learners. There is a significant provision of bilingual programs in Spanish. Around 92% of students are Hispanic, 6% are black with the small remaining group being Asian or White. The school is in receipt of Title I funding. Attendance levels have increased to 92.8% which reflects a significant improvement compared to last year. Attendance levels are comparable to similar and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is an effective leader with a clear sense of purpose.
- Comprehensive administrative systems have been established to collect data to promote the progress of students.
- Support strategies to help students who are at risk are well designed.
- The school is well ordered and calm.
- A good team ethos has been established; staff are hard working and eager to develop their professional skills.
- The school has good strategies in place to further improve attendance.
- Parents are positive about the school; they are pleased with the progress so far.
- The development and use of student portfolios is establishing coherence in the outcomes of lessons.
- Good professional development is promoting the goals of the school.
- The school has effectively identified some core issues for promotion, including guided reading, conferencing and the bilingual provision.

What the school needs to improve

- Achieve consistency among the staff in the use and interpretation of progress data and the use of formative assessment in mathematics.
- Ensure that best practice in the delivery of science and social studies units is replicated in all classes.
- Continue to build the capacity of the senior leaders through professional development to more fully engage them in decision-making.
- Explore avenues for providing students with experiences in music and the performing arts so as to broaden and deepen their cultural and artistic awareness.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school has established a secure basis for its continuing development. Students are being provided with core skills and knowledge which will support them in successive stages of their school careers. Performance in writing and reading are improving from a low starting point. Students are more involved with their learning. A positive culture is being established which is reflected in the good relationships shown between the staff and students.

Data is used well to establish teaching and learning which are geared to the needs of the students. Staff are supportive of each other and are flexible in their attitudes to change. The school is open to ideas and values the contributions which are made to its development by consultants. The improving attendance figures are an indicator of the support parents are giving the school. Given the evident commitment of the principal and staff, the school has the capacity to maintain and build upon its current achievements.

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.

As a new school the baseline data collated for all groups of students was particularly detailed and comprehensive. Each member of staff has an assessment binder which itemizes the performance information for each student in their class. It includes information from the Grow Report, including all test scores and an item analysis for each student. The administration regularly disseminates ongoing information gained from assessments and tests which provide teachers with up-to-date data on the performance and progress of students. Staff are becoming more experienced in the use of this new information to revise goals and plans.

Given the high proportion of English language learners and students with special education needs there is an appropriate focus on the data for these students. The school is inclusive. It caters well for those who have special needs where a range of intervention programs and detailed individual education plans ensure these students are supported and make steady progress. As part of its English as a second language program the school provides transitional bilingual programs in English and Spanish. An appropriate testing procedure identifies beginners and intermediate students to receive language arts and mathematics instruction in Spanish following a 40/60 model (40% English/ 60% Spanish). As a new school there is no comparative data available at this 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.

The school’s use of a wide range of baseline assessment information is instrumental in enabling the setting of whole school goals. As a result a primary focus has been on raising literacy levels. The school has implemented the Accelerated Literacy program in English and Spanish in regular and transitional bilingual classes. A specific emphasis is on guided reading. The school effectively identifies reading levels of all students at an early stage. Teachers appropriately model strategies that develop specific students’ reading skills which are then practiced independently. Regular conferencing with students monitors well their progress and provides a basis of support for those in greatest need of improvement.

In a broader context all staff were involved in a collaborative exercise of determining the goals and plans associated with the Comprehensive Education Plan. The staff of the school are committed to improving the performance and progress of the students. Regular meetings of grade level staff have a clear purpose of setting high goals for improving teaching practice to support this. The implementation of a student portfolio for each program of study has provided a good basis for standardizing the work and monitoring the progress of individual students. Through its planning of the bilingual program the school plays particular attention to the needs of English language learners.

The high expectations of the principal are conveyed to students and staff through a series of scheduled review meetings. These meetings, which involve both the class teacher and a sample of students, involve a discussion of progress and coverage of the instructional program. The school conveys expectations about attendance and schoolwork to parents through a parents’ handbook in both English and Spanish. The direct involvement of parents in their child’s education is minimal, but as a group they are more supportive and appreciative of what the school is now achieving.

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.

Instructional programs in the school are closely aligned to the mandated curriculum. Given the student profile in the school there is a strong emphasis on raising basic skills. Assessment data indicates low level reading and writing skills, hence the priority given to the guided reading program and writing initiatives. The regular assessment of these aspects produces helpful information to modify planning or introduce intervention strategies to support specific students.

The school budget has been effectively used to promote the development of the school. Resources have been appropriately allocated to the acquisition of materials and software which support the development of literacy in both regular and bilingual programs. The impact of these decisions is reflected in the significantly improving standards of reading and writing for some students. Each classroom has its own library with books relevant to the reading levels of the students and in addition bilingual classrooms have leveled libraries in both English and Spanish. All classrooms have access to computers with

software relevant to the needs of the students. However there have been insufficient resources allocated to the provision of music and dance in the curriculum.

Staffing decisions reflect the needs of the school. For example, there has been an increase in the number of support staff in the bilingual program. Teachers readily accept and describe their accountability for students' learning in review meetings. Teachers' collaborative approaches, for example in sessions held by literacy and mathematics' coaches, ensure the alignment of instruction with the necessary skills and concepts to be developed in students.

Most students are focused on the learning activities in lessons and are actively engaged in their studies. This involvement ensures that behavior in lessons is usually good. These improved attitudes in lessons are reflected in much improved attendance levels. The school has effective procedures for monitoring attendance.

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 majority of the staff are relatively new to the profession. They have shown themselves to be hard working and committed to the development of the school. They are eager to improve their skills and readily involve themselves in professional development. The planning of instruction is progressing well. However, there are inconsistencies in the way assessment data is used to adapt teaching programs. The use of formative assessment in mathematics is not as well developed as in English language arts.

The school has regularly used consultants to work with individual teachers and in small groups to model instruction in English language arts and mathematics. The in-house support comes from literacy and mathematics coaches who support and advise staff on the delivery of their teaching programs. The concept of a 'learning walk' has been introduced where staff visit their colleagues' lessons to observe what is happening. The proposed outcome is to allow teachers to work collaboratively and to provide feedback to each other. These staff development activities are effectively raising the overall level of competence in the school.

The principal sets high expectations. He regularly checks on the quality of instruction and is successful in communicating and sharing his expectation with staff at the school. He is highly regarded by staff, parents and students. Parents attribute the successful transition and start of the 'new' school to his clear focus and commitment to the interests of the students. The principal is well supported by his administrative team; the school runs exceptionally smoothly on a day to day basis. The partnership with external agencies works well for the support of students who are in need of some form of intervention strategy.

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.

Because it still in a formative stage of development the school's monitoring and review processes are evolving. The systematic analysis of data to benchmark progress has provided a good foundation stage. At the classroom level teachers are self evaluative and are willing to take advice. The review process for individual classes has been helpful in this respect. In practice, the school is at a formative stage in using the review of students' portfolios to adjust instructional programs in view of this evidence. The assessment binder which is compiled by each teacher is an effective mechanism for making interim evaluations of students' progress and a 'kick-start' for appropriate intervention strategies.

To date the reviews and monitoring of teaching in classes has been directed and completed by the principal. This 'hands on approach' has been a necessary step in the initial stages of the school's life to establish clear expectations and common approaches. However, given the current stage of development, senior leaders are not sufficiently involved in the review and monitoring process and in consequence this has had adverse effects on the development of a shared approach to a summative evaluation of medium and longer-term goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 325 (PS 325)	∅	✓	+
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	