



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

John Harvard School

Public School 034

**104-12 Springfield Boulevard
Queens
NY 11429**

Principal: Pauline Shakespeare

Dates of review: November 14 - 15, 2006

Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The John Harvard School is a kindergarten through grade 5 school, with 562 students. Black students, many from Caribbean nations, represent 80% of the population. Hispanics are 13% of the population. Asians and others make up 7% of the population. There is about the same proportion of special education students as in similar schools, which is lower than schools across the City. The proportion of English language learners is below similar schools, as well as schools across the City. The school is Title I eligible. At just under 10%, the proportion of students who are newly arrived into the country is about the same as in other schools. Most of these students were born in Haiti, with others born in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic.

The current principal began in April 2004. Attendance has increased and, at nearly 93% in 2005, was equivalent to other similar schools, as well as schools across the City.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The environment is structured to support high academic achievement for all students.
- Strong focused leadership for high quality teaching is provided.
- All available data is used to understand the learning needs of all children.
- Targeted professional development is provided so that teachers are able to differentiate their instruction, especially in English language arts.
- A friendly supportive school culture is provided, in which students, teachers and parents feel respected and valued as individuals.
- Specialized programs and interventions address the broad spectrum of students' learning needs well.
- Collaborative problem solving empowers teachers to share in the leadership and decision making in the school.
- Annual increases in student performance are achieved, as measured by State and City tests.
- Excellence, effort and citizenship are recognized through public celebrations and tangible rewards.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to provide professional development and coaching to support the implementation of the Everyday Math program.
- Strategize with stakeholders to devise mechanisms to support increased opportunities for enrichment activities outside of the regular school day.
- Continue to provide teachers with training in differentiated instruction to meet every student's learning needs in all content areas.
- Find ways to expand students' experiences in the arts and other non-tested subjects.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The school is led by a strong, well-focused principal who sets high expectations for academic achievement. Teachers, students and parents describe a school that is warm and caring while demanding hard work, structured learning and continuous assessment. They are proud of the school and the progress the school has made in the short time that the principal has been there. Parents who had considered removing their children from the school prior to the arrival of the current administration are now advocates for the school. Fifty percent of the teachers have been hired by the current principal through a very selective process. This has created a highly professional instructional staff, committed to doing whatever it takes to provide the most effective instruction to the students of the John Harvard School.

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's leaders and its teachers routinely collect data to inform their daily understanding of the progress of their students. In grades kindergarten to 3, the school administers the Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System as well as assessing student achievement in oral language and print concepts. Benchmark tests are administered to determine accuracy and comprehension, utilizing components of the balanced literacy program. In the upper grades the school analyses data retrieved from State tests and the Princeton Review, as well as information from bi-weekly running records tracking students' reading skills. Assessment data on each student is recorded in a comprehensive class spreadsheet, enabling teachers and administrators to easily identify areas of weakness.

Teachers create common grade level tests in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. These are administered at least every other week to track student understanding and enforce consistent instruction. Results are reviewed at weekly grade level meetings. Additionally, embedded in the literacy program are discrete assessments of individual student's progress which inform daily lesson planning.

The school gathers information about its English language learners through home language surveys, tests students to assess their language proficiency and crafts individual programs to meet their needs. This enables a high proportion of English language learners to reach proficiency in English. Special education students are assessed according to their identified needs and receive individualized instructional programs. The school does not analyze data by race or ethnicity.

The school is aware of its progress as compared to similar nearby schools as well as elementary schools in the region. Their focus, however, is on the progress of their own

students, classes and grade levels which is monitored weekly. Progress is compared by subject areas and, while the school is rightly proud of its performance increases, there is a recognition that work remains to be done, especially in moving students beyond level 1.

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

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

The school’s Comprehensive Education Plan sets forth improvement targets for the progress of the school’s children. Likewise, the principal’s annual goals include achievement targets. She is, for instance, committed to raising reading proficiency to 80%. Regular assessment in the classroom is integral to the school’s ability to use the available data to plan each student’s next learning step. Daily assessments of students’ progress in English language arts, regular assessments of students’ mathematical comprehension and rigorous analysis of bi-weekly common student assessments in each content area provide a rich array of data about every student. Needs are quickly identified and addressed through adjustments in instruction, extra support or referral for academic intervention.

Once identified, students in greatest need for improvement are serviced through the special education program, the English language learner program or academic intervention services, as deemed appropriate. Weekly meetings of the academic intervention team ensure that students are identified at the first indication of a concern and plans are created to address their specific needs. The school offers remedial programs such as Reading Recovery, Great Leaps and Soar to Success. Students in the extended day program receive targeted instruction in either mathematics or English language arts based on their individual needs. Saturday school provides extra support in the core tested areas to students in grades 3 and 4.

Students and parents are constantly reminded that all students are able to achieve at a high level. They receive daily encouragement from their teachers and the principal, who knows all of her students well. Progress reports on each student’s performance are sent home every other week. Parents receive monthly communications from the principal urging them to encourage their children to learn, check their homework and foster a love of reading at home. Monthly family nights provide parents with information about what their children are learning in each content area. Monthly calendars expressing the topics that will be covered in each subject are distributed to parents and posted around the school.

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’s curriculum is aligned with the State standards and teachers’ lessons show evidence of the strands and standards that are being addressed. The school’s English language arts curriculum incorporates the components of balanced literacy in a tight, assessment-driven model that is rigorously adhered to. Coaches support teachers in the delivery of instruction, including techniques for differentiation, although not all teachers are

fully confident in this. Curriculum maps guide the instruction in all subjects and common bi-weekly assessments help to inform decisions about subsequent instruction. Instruction is engaging and challenging, based on the knowledge teachers have about their students' learning needs. Currently, students' experience of the wider curriculum which includes non-tested subjects such as the arts is somewhat limited.

Teachers are held accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. This is through daily informal observations by the principal or assistant principal, formal evaluations, reviews of written lesson plans, the analysis of student's report card grades, and the performance of students. Teachers whose students are shown to be performing below those in another classroom are asked to explain the deficit. Teachers are routinely asked to describe why they chose particular instructional techniques. To ensure that common assessments, especially in English language arts, are being administered and analyzed by classroom teachers, the coach performs the assessments himself on a random sample of students at unannounced intervals during the school year.

The quantity and quality of data provides the principal and her administration with a deep understanding of the general and particular needs of the institution. This knowledge drives all of the decision making in the school, including those concerned with the budget, the staff and the schedule. For example, when data revealed that grade 1 students had not progressed as expected in reading during 2005-2006, the principal added a teacher at that grade level to reduce class size. Teachers who demonstrate particular instructional strengths are reassigned to where their skills are most needed. Academic intervention services were increased by reassigning the librarian to a 50% support position. In science, a skilled teacher was reassigned to a science cluster position, ensuring that all students receive two periods of science per week.

Students feel challenged in class and delight in explaining what they are learning. They express pride in their school and affection for their teachers and the principal and feel known, respected and cared for by the adults in the building. Administrators and teachers are vigilant with respect to student attendance and prompt arrival, areas of concern prior to the arrival of the current principal. Tardiness was addressed directly with parents and has decreased dramatically. Attendance for the first ten weeks of this school year was 92.3% and is expected to increase after adjustment from the official enrollment data is made.

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 principal is recognized and respected as the instructional leader of the school and, in collaboration with her administrative team and teachers, has the capacity to continue to move the school forward. She also has the respect and admiration of students and parents. The school is well organized and runs smoothly. Halls and classrooms are bright and welcoming and bulletin boards offer colorful displays of student work. The principal holds high expectations for her staff and engages in a rigorous hiring process that includes multiple interviews, strong recommendations and requires that candidates successfully model a lesson. Selection is based on content knowledge, teaching skills, a strong desire to work with the school's population and a willingness to participate fully in the life of the school. Capacity to use data is not a criterion for employment but is an expectation that is embedded in the delivery of instruction in the school.

Professional development is rigorous and regular. Teachers meet weekly with the coaches as professional learning teams and receive lessons in instructional techniques designed to meet the needs of their students identified through regular assessments. They also meet by grade levels to analyze data from the common assessments, plan lessons, and verify that the curriculum maps are being followed or adjust them to meet newly identified needs. Teachers also have weekly grade level meetings with the principal to address patterns of achievement revealed by testing and anecdotal data derived from classroom visits. When a need is identified, the principal provides instructional support to teachers. Her current focus is increasing teachers' mathematical knowledge so that they are better able to implement the Everyday Math program.

The school does not currently have formalized alliances with youth development and support services to supplement the school's program and assist in achieving the academic goals. However, the place of the school in the Queens Village community is longstanding. Informal community support systems are integral to the life of the school and its students.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

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

The school's operational structure supports the regular review of student progress throughout the year. Teachers and administrators meet weekly in professional learning teams, grade level teams, academic intervention teams, and administrative teams. The overarching focus of all of these collaborative team meetings is the analysis of all of the data available regarding students and their progress.

Data is collated and displayed in clear concrete formats that allow all parties to see the evidence and understand its meaning. Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms inform interventions for students and teachers. For instance, a student whose reading diagnostic scores indicate problems with decoding and comprehension might be given extra support through the reading recovery program. Similarly, a teacher whose students' scores reveal a deficit in a specific mathematical algorithm might receive support from the coach or the principal.

The school and its teachers demonstrate a high level of knowledge about each student, practice routine assessments of student progress, plan interventions when warranted, evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions and adjust plans accordingly. The curricula and governance of the school support the flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: John Harvard School (PS 34)	∅	✓	+
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