



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Robert Vernam School

Public School/Middle School 42

**488 Beach 66 Street
Queens
NY 11692**

Principal: Riva Madden

Dates of review: May 29 - 31, 2007

Reviewer: Ted Solow

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School/Middle School 42 is located in the Arverne Section on the Rockaway Peninsula in Queens. It serves a population of 683 students in grades kindergarten through 8, of which approximately 79% are Black, 17% are Hispanic, 3% are Asian and other ethnicities and 1% are White. There is a slightly higher proportion of girls than boys. Special education students account for 20% of the school enrollment, while 2% of the students are English language learners. The attendance rate is 90%, which is lower than similar schools and schools throughout the City. The school receives Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal focuses on teaching and learning within a school philosophy of high expectations and academic rigor for all students.
- The principal is highly visible and knows the students well.
- Staffing, budgetary, and scheduling decisions support the educational needs of the students very well.
- The staff uses the information gathered from performance data to address teaching and learning practices.
- Procedures, policies, and school rules are well known and followed.
- The educational program actively engages the students.
- The administrative team provides strong leadership skills within a warm, caring and supportive environment.
- The classrooms are richly decorated and celebrate current student work.
- The differentiated professional development program effectively supports the needs of new staff, senior staff and the students.
- Grade teams work collaboratively to provide optimal teaching and learning conditions.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the analysis of disaggregated data to include all ethnic groups within the school.
- Develop additional activities to further involve parents in the school life of their children.
- Create a protocol to monitor the performance and progress of students referred to the pupil personnel team.
- Include community partners on the school leadership team.
- Increase youth development activities to include peer tutoring.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal has completed her fourth year at the school and has gathered praise from all school constituencies. There is a sense of stability and order that has helped the school make educational gains across the grades. Data assessment systems are in place to drive the educational practices and activities in each classroom. The teachers, coaches, administrators, staff developers, and support personnel have formed a collaborative team that is moving the school forward. Teachers, administrators, and support staff meet weekly in grade teams to plan, analyze data, and receive professional development. The performance data for individual students, classes, grades, cohorts, and other sub-groups of interest to the school are regularly reviewed. Teachers are adept at analyzing and using data to gather information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their students so as to guide instructional practices. The principal and her expanded administration have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement.

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.

Students are monitored by the use of many formal and informal assessment tools. Data generated from all sources is then analyzed to track performance across classes and grades. In grades kindergarten to 2, students are assessed every six to eight weeks in English language arts to establish benchmarks and gauge progress being made by individual students, classes, and grades. In grades 3 through 8, there are school-generated weekly assessments in English language arts and mathematics in addition to other tests in English language arts and mathematics, which are used to establish levels and monitor progress. Additional data is gathered from conferencing sessions, class and grade assessments, portfolio reviews, and teacher observations in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the content area subjects and to develop a realistic overview of student performance. The expanded administration views all student, class, grade, and school data to form a picture of how the school is moving towards, meeting, or exceeding its goals.

The principal has systems in place to monitor the progress of English language learners, special education students, males and females, and the two main ethnic groups in the school. The principal recognizes the need to include all ethnic groups in her data analysis in order to have a realistic picture of performance. Performance data is reviewed for other sub-groups of interest in the school. Data analysis has shown that special education students in collaborative team teaching classes have fared better than their counterparts in self-contained classes. Data analysis is used to track the progress of every student, class, and grade, as well as schoolwide performance from year to year, to inform all phases of school improvement. Comparisons are made with similar schools in the district.

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 collaborative culture in the school enables teams of staff members to effectively plan and set school goals. All team meetings focus on improving student performance across the grades. The instructional team meets weekly to discuss their observations of classroom instruction and activities. The principal then establishes weekly academic goals for the school. The administrative team meets with teachers in September to outline school goals, discuss new initiatives, and establish individual, class and grade goals for the school year. Weekly follow-up meetings review progress made and plans for the future. Timeframes for improvement are developed for meeting established goals. Student goals in grades 3 through 8 are designed to meet or exceed State standards. Students meet with their teachers during weekly conferencing sessions to establish personal goals and expectations for success and receive feedback on the progress they have made. Students can articulate their long and short term goals, know their current reading and mathematics levels and explain what they have to do to move up to a higher level.

Students, identified as being high risk, are referred to the academic intervention services team for assistance. Services are provided using a variety of approaches. Students not making adequate progress are referred to the pupil personnel team. The team reviews a student’s history along with current performance data, prior to making recommendations for next steps that could include an evaluation for special education services. Parents are invited to participate in all phases of the review and planning sessions. The principal is now creating a case manager position to monitor the progress of all students referred to the pupil personnel team.

Parents receive regular communications from the school. A monthly progress report which outlines achievements, suggestions for improvement and behavior for the month is sent home for every student. All communications and meetings stress the academic rigor the school has designed for every student. Parents are kept apprised of all school goals for high standards across all segments of the school through their participation on the school leadership team and through monthly summaries of each meeting. Nevertheless, the principal is concerned to develop additional activities to further involve parents in the school life of their children.

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 City’s curriculum in English language arts and mathematics provides the framework for all planning activities throughout the school. Other subjects follow the State scope and sequence to guide their instructional activities. The balanced literacy program is supported by the use of leveled books and well-stocked libraries in each classroom. Preparations are underway to teach the new integrated mathematics and the earth science courses to students in the advanced Regents preparation classes. The literacy and mathematics

coaches and lead teachers model lessons and work with small groups of students to support the efforts of the classroom teachers. The staff gathers and analyzes data generated from many curriculum sources to guide instructional practices.

Teachers are held accountable through the weekly review of lesson plans and class activities in consultation with a member of the administrative team. These discussions ensure that teachers use data to inform instruction, plan differentiated activities, create flexible groupings and align student outcomes to the State standards. Classrooms are richly decorated and include current samples of student work, rubrics, word walls, number charts and student information. Students are motivated, actively engaged, focused, on task and can articulate individual and group goals and responsibilities.

The principal is a highly effective manager. All budgetary, scheduling, and staffing decisions are creatively designed to meet the needs of the students. Expert teachers provide support in mathematics and foreign language instruction. The modern technology program is supported well by the budget. The principal is planning to increase the use of smartboard technology next year to enhance classroom presentations and enable students to use the most up to date technology. There is a culture of mutual respect between teachers, students and administrators. Students trust the adults in the school. Many students confirm that the principal knows them and will always listen to them if they have issues to discuss.

Student attendance is a high priority. Absences trigger an immediate phone call home by the attendance coordinator, who also places wake up calls for chronic latecomers. The family assistant and at times the principal will make home visits for students with problematic attendance. All attendance procedures are outlined in the teacher and parent handbooks and are known by all. Excellent student and class attendance are recognized and celebrated by the principal. Each month the class with the highest rate of attendance receives a special award.

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 principal has assembled a skilled staff. Prospective teachers are asked to demonstrate classroom proficiency and interpersonal skills. The principal selects staff based on their content area knowledge and a commitment to use data to improve instructional outcomes. New teachers receive an orientation prior to the opening of the school year. All professional development activities at the school are differentiated to support the needs of new staff, experienced staff, and the students. Staff surveys serve as the basis for the yearly professional development plan. Professional development activities take place during weekly grade conferences, faculty meetings, study groups and at voluntary lunch and learn sessions. The professional development plan is designed to accommodate any needs that arise during the school year.

The administrators visit classrooms on a regular schedule. Teachers receive timely written or oral feedback after each visit. The principal conducts walkthrough visits with her extended administration to observe classroom activities and note best practices. Teachers are observed, have conferences and receive a written report in a short period of time in order to monitor the impact on student progress. Peer observations are well embedded across the school. Teachers have weekly grade team meetings with administrators,

coaches and support staff to discuss curriculum, develop lesson plans, review student work samples, examine assessment data and revise pacing calendars. The supervisory team meets to discuss disaggregated data, strategies to improve instruction and support services required to achieve academic success in all classes.

The principal has the respect of the whole school community. She also has the capacity to continue to improve the school. The school runs smoothly and all rules and procedures as outlined in handbooks are known and followed. The school has developed partnerships with many community agencies that support youth development. Activities take place during, before and after school as well as on the week-end. The principal recognizes that including one or more strategic partners on the school leadership team would assist the school with their planning process and provide an additional perspective. Additionally, the principal sees the benefits of a peer tutoring program and is developing a process to initiate this activity.

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 provides the framework to move the school forward. Goals are developed and monitored during monthly school leadership team meetings. All assessment data is reviewed by the team to measure progress across classes, grades and the school. Goals are revised after meetings with staff and administrators to assess where revisions are necessary. The identified weaknesses result in an immediate action.

Comparisons are made using formal and informal data sources across classes and grades in order to assess progress. Grade 7 and 8 English language arts scores showed a decline in level. The school responded by expanding the role of the literacy coach to provide additional push-in services for all upper grade language arts classes. The coach supports the classroom teacher providing strategies and working with small groups of students to address the identified need. The supervisors monitor student performance across the school to determine the improvement in performance outcomes.

The principal conducts monthly reviews that include analyzing all summative and formative assessment data so that staff can receive feedback to address student strengths and areas of need. During weekly planning sessions, discussions focus on the identified areas of need and how they can be properly addressed. Teachers see the process as a collaborative measure to improvement which helps them to address student achievement concerns.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Robert Vernam School (PS/MS 42)	∅	✓	+
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	