



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Clarence Witherspoon School

Public School 45

**126 – 128 150 Street
Queens
NY 11436**

Principal: Evelyn Terrell

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Reviewer: David Herbert

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Clarence Witherspoon School has 440 students enrolled in grades kindergarten through 6. Attendance is 93.1%, which is higher than both similar and City schools. Ninety six percent of students are Black, 3% are Hispanic and 1% is White. Just fewer than 4% of students are English language learners and 15% are special education students. Seven percent of students are recent immigrants, coming largely from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Ecuador. The school receives Title 1 funding for 99.7% of students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school collects and analyzes data very effectively to monitor the progress of students.
- Performance data is analyzed robustly by administration and the instructional team to identify areas for further improvement.
- Teachers use their 'data folios' well, both individually and in their grade teams, to identify issues for focus in their instruction.
- The school's good systems for using data to differentiate instruction have contributed to higher results and year on year recognition as a 'rapidly improving school'.
- Professional development activities are closely aligned to the needs identified from analysis of school performance data.
- Teachers collaborate well together, planning and evaluating their instruction in teams.
- Parents are well informed about their children's learning with a monthly progress report.
- Students with particular needs are supported very well and make good progress.
- The principal is highly respected and has brought about significant improvement in the school's performance.
- The school runs smoothly and calmly, providing an effective learning environment.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the capacity of teachers to use data with students so that they understand their own next learning steps.
- Make the links between annual whole school goals and shorter term goals at grade, class and teacher levels more explicit.
- Ensure that interim class, grade and school goals are more measurable so that progress towards them can be more objectively measured during the year.
- Continue to refine the consistency of differentiation in instruction.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

Clarence Witherspoon School has been recognized for its rapid improvement in successive years. This improvement is built on the school's good understanding of student performance from data analysis, supported by an effective leadership structure that responds quickly to issues needing development.

Individual student performance is tracked continuously as the basis for planning and instruction. This data is held by all teachers, coaches and administration according to their needs and strategic role in the school. The result is that appropriate comparisons are made and lead to responsive interventions and professional development where concerns arise. Students themselves appreciate the quality of this provision, saying that 'my teacher knows what I'm strong at, so he knows how to challenge me.' A third grade student perceptively said that 'we learn from them, but they learn from us too, so they understand us more.'

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.

All members of administration and faculty at Clarence Witherspoon School collect and use performance data well to track the progress of students. Every teacher and administrator has a 'data folio' which means that everyone has immediate access to relevant assessment information. Although this format for keeping data is relatively new, the school has collected and used the data for many years and the new system is therefore having immediate and significant impact. The assistant principals and coaches complete most of the analysis of school data so that, together with the principal, leaders can make well-grounded strategic decisions about instruction and professional development. A summary evaluation concisely captures the overall strengths in each grade and requires coaches to state how 'struggles' are being addressed. These summaries and strategic decisions are communicated to teachers through grade level meetings so that appropriate instructional changes can be implemented. The school continues to seek ways to help teachers to complete this analysis more independently.

Teachers keep interim assessment data, ongoing running records and conferencing notes in their folio. This enables them to identify students' strengths, and the skills which need further focus. They openly compare and review this data in their common planning time within each grade, maintaining a larger picture of students' achievement and the strategies that has led to their success and this information is beginning to be shared with students themselves for feedback and further motivation. Students who are English language learners or who are special education students are tracked carefully using specific assessments. An accelerated class has been introduced in grades 1 and 2. The performance of these groups is being closely monitored to evaluate the effectiveness of

the strategy, together with the impact on other classes in the grades concerned. Comparison of performance with the school's own past and other similar schools is an important baseline of analysis by administration. There is a driving ambition to improve continuously, and a need to demonstrate this with data. The school was recognized as 'Rapidly Improving' in 2006 and 2007 and as 'Rapidly Improving and Gap Closing' 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.

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

The school leadership team builds whole-school goals from regional aims and the data in the school report card. Progress towards these is tracked through regular practice tests and interim assessments. For example, data from math interim assessments is used by the coach and assistant principal to target students on the borderline between grades and additional input is provided to help them meet their goals. The Comprehensive Education Plan includes relevant time frames and is explained to teachers by the principal. Teachers know the overall aims of the school, but do not yet fully link their own ambitions to these whole school goals. However, they are highly committed to improving individual student performance where the goal is the next learning step, new skill or knowledge needed.

The principal and assistant principals review school data to identify the issues to be taken to grade meetings. These ambitions can include focus on curriculum skills or content, instructional strategies and the needs of groups of students. In this way, goals for classes and grades are more often qualitative than quantitative. Teachers are fully engaged with these priorities by the coaches and assistant principals in the context of their own classes. This very effectively links the whole-school goals to individual teachers and classes, though the connections are not always explicit.

Assessment data on each student is collated monthly in a clear progress report that is sent to parents. These reports identify issues of behavior, application or attitude for each individual student for parents to discuss with their child. A space for individual comments means that teachers can highlight specific areas of growth for each student. This powerful tool keeps parents well informed and gives them the opportunity to be fully involved in their child's education. The monthly report is one indication of the high expectations that are apparent throughout the school. All staff talk confidently about their own contribution to maintaining and improving the performance of individual students, and hence of the school as a whole.

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 with well-developed features.

The school meets the needs of the mandated curriculum through its selection of materials and programs. The 'skill of the week' is adopted across the school, and is translated into relevant content for each grade. A software program, Leap Track is one good example of the use of specific resources to link assessment to instruction. Students in second and third grades complete activity sheets on computers, the results of which are converted into

diagnostic assessments and individualized programs for them to extend their reading skills.

The close monitoring of performance data by administration holds teachers to account very robustly for the impact of their instruction. Teachers in grade teams are eager to collaborate and develop their practice, constantly evaluating what has been effective and how strengths can be used in other parts of the curriculum. Professional development work on managing differentiated group tasks within lessons is having good impact and is quickly extending across all teachers and subjects. Reading groups are differentiated so that appropriate tasks can be used to challenge each student. Mini lessons for groups provide specific support to those students who need it and help them succeed. Budgeting and scheduling decisions are made in response to identified needs. Staffing is specifically arranged to raise the level of outcomes for students. Teachers are placed in grades each year on the basis of their observed expertise, aptitude with age groups, class management skills and capacity for collaboration. Particular opportunities have been created for students, such as the introduction of practical science lessons, which also supports the common planning time for home room teachers. Students concentrate and apply themselves extremely well, particularly when the lessons are more practical, and therefore more engaging. They can focus on tasks in independent work and respond well to their teachers in guided workshop activities.

Attendance levels are good, helped by the introduction of an automated home dialing system in 2005. The increase achieved then has been maintained through good school systems and follow up procedures.

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.

Over time the principal has recruited a strong leadership team of assistant principals and coaches who are capable and confident with data analysis and the subsequent planning for improvement. Both assistant principals have had experience as coaches themselves, and the creation of a dedicated science room has allowed other teachers to develop particular expertise in this subject too. Professional development is well focused and has good impact in important areas. In addition to the survey of teacher needs, issues for professional development are identified from cabinet discussions and data analysis. This allows issues to be addressed as they arise during the year, with coaches and assistant principals making input to grade meetings in teachers' common planning time. Clear procedures mean that previous practice is consolidated and extended in each session. Training on data analysis last year led to the creation of the data folios this year, which are very successful. The school is now seeking more independence in teachers' use of their data, sometimes directly with students, and further refinement of the differentiated instruction from data evaluation.

The principal and assistant principals observe teaching regularly, using this information to plan for professional development with individuals, grades and for all faculty. As yet, teachers have little formal opportunity to observe each other. However, the frequent common planning time allows teachers to work very collaboratively. They openly compare their experiences of what has worked well in their instruction, share knowledge, lesson plans and ideas to support each others' effectiveness. These structures and systems have been led by the principal, who is respected and has the capacity to create positive change.

Students also reflect this and express their confidence in the school when they say that, 'She's a great principal – she's always there when you need help with your problems'. The school runs smoothly and calmly on a day to day basis due to the good planning and excellent relationships between staff and students. The parents say that 'the children always come first' and that the principal 'makes time for one child to feel special, and does this for every student'.

Partnerships with outside bodies are used to supplement the work of faculty. A leadership program is used to build confidence and capacity in three classes and residencies from business brings other professionals into the school to work directly with 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 proficient with well-developed features.

The school's goals and plans are implemented largely by the instructional team, consisting of the principal, assistant principals, coaches and teacher's center. Using practice test and interim assessment data they monitor continuously whether classes and grades are on target to reach grade level. In this way they seek the overall school goals for the year, and know the alignment with these aims. The introduction of measurable interim goals would allow this monitoring to be formalized and shared with teachers more effectively.

Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms are embedded at all levels of practice. Individual teachers use their data folios to explore different students' performance and share this with parents in the monthly progress report. Grade teams compare performance between classes, sometimes combining students across classes or switching teachers within a grade to achieve a particular short term aim. Coaches and assistant principals compare performance across classes, grades and groups of students. The school constantly seeks ways to make this planning and review more effective. For example the alignment of skills focus in instruction between homeroom and intervention teachers is being considered. This will lead to closer synchronization between teachers' work and the possibility of more push in provision to replace some current pull out work.

Changes to interventions, scheduling and professional development are made responsively when performance data indicates need. Changes to the State testing arrangements in science led to the creation of specialized instruction in the subject in a dedicated resource room. Subsequent evaluation and refinement of this arrangement meant that adequate yearly progress was achieved in science and students benefited from a high quality of practical experience.

All faculty members have a clear drive to continue raising student achievement. Their professional development and dialogue, use of data folios and evaluation of instruction are all focused on student outcomes. Although the school knows that it is achieving well it uses each successive phase of goal setting to reach higher and further.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Clarence Witherspoon School (PS 45)	∅	✓	+
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	