



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Hillside School**

**Public School 54**

**86 – 02 127 Street  
Queens  
NY 11418**

**Principal: Diane Jones**

**Dates of review: November 29 – December 1, 2006**

**Reviewer: Jan Lomas**

# 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

Public School 54, The Hillside School, serves 527 kindergarten through grade 5 students. The school population is richly diverse with the highest proportions of students coming from Asian and other families 43.5% and Hispanic families 42.3%. In addition, 12.7% of students are from Black families with the remaining small proportion from White families 1.5%. The proportion of students 17.1 % recently arrived in the country is much higher than at similar and other City schools. Many of these have come from Guyana, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago.

Seventeen percent of students receive support as English language learners and nearly 8% of the student population are special education students.

The proportion of students known to be eligible for Title 1 funding is 72.2%.

Attendance figures for the school have historically been similar to similar and City schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal knows the community, students and staff well and, in turn, is well-respected by all.
- The principal is receptive to developing a clearer focus on the use of data to inform planning at all levels.
- The school is a caring community and students feel secure and supported academically and socially.
- The school embraces its multicultural identity and there is concern for every student and family.
- The staff is mutually supportive and this means that they work collaboratively as a team.
- The principal and assistant principal work together effectively.
- Students appreciate the trusting relationships that they have with all staff.
- The school runs smoothly and is an orderly place in which to work and learn.
- Students behave well and respond readily to their instruction.
- Bulletin boards are well used to focus on learning and to celebrate achievement.

### What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the rigorous and systematic collection and use of data to enable the school to focus sharply on student achievement and development priorities.
- Improve strategic planning so that school priorities are clear to all and can be and evaluated effectively to drive developments.
- Strengthen all teachers' ability to use ongoing assessment to effectively differentiate instruction to meet students' needs and accelerate progress.
- Continue to develop ways to improve effective learning for English language learners, English as a Second Language and special education students to ensure appropriate progress.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is an undeveloped school with proficient features.**

Public School 54, the Hillside School, has a caring culture where relationships between staff and students are warm and students trust the adults who care for them. The school is a multicultural and diverse community and the principal and her staff have created a secure environment which seeks to support all students and their families.

Although there are a number of proficient features, the school's work is currently undeveloped overall. The principal is aware of, and receptive to, the need to use data with precision to underpin all development strategies and plans and to respond to ongoing assessment and analysis with appropriately differentiated instruction which meets the needs of all students.

### 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 undeveloped.**

The school uses a number of sources of data in order to assess students for grouping purposes and for identifying the need for academic intervention services. However, the principal is aware that some teachers are more confident than others when undertaking this grouping of students. At the beginning of the school year, teachers look at prior information about progress or, in the kindergarten, start an inventory of skills to which information can be incrementally added and which provides a baseline when students enter formal education. Test data from a range of formal tests is used during the year, alongside teachers' own assessments and their professional judgments, to consider, and later review, recommendations for academic support or extended school attendance. Academic intervention support staff also use additional assessments to carefully monitor progress in the specific areas identified for each student. Running records and conference notes about students' skills are kept by class teachers in the core areas but there is some inconsistency in their use.

The principal and senior staff look at data and talk through any trends, patterns or emerging issues for individuals, subjects, classes and grades and some sub-groups. The main outcomes are then discussed with, and disseminated to, teachers. Planning for whole-school strategic development and for strategies and resourcing to support development needs identified does follow from such discussions. However, this can lack precision and focus and thus opportunities for maximum impact can be lost. For example, the school has recognized that recent data shows the need to improve the progress of English language learners and additional support personnel have been deployed towards this student group to provide additional assistance. However, the longer-term planning for this strand of development does not demonstrate how data will be gathered to monitor the impact of this strategy.

The school has also become aware that data shows that special education students are not making the progress that they might and is beginning to consider how to amend the Comprehensive Educational Plan in response to this. As yet, the school does not use data to fully analyze the results of other groups such as those defined by ethnicity, gender or of special interest to this school community.

The principal is working within the local network group of colleagues to try other tools for collecting and analyzing data such as Early Learning Accomplishment Profile Plus which, for example, provides opportunities for the comparison of grade and class performance. She is responsive to the useful opportunities that piloting new methods may bring to the effective analysis of student achievement data.

**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 undeveloped.**

The structure of meetings in the school and the collaborative and mutually supportive relationships between teachers mean that there are opportunities for staff to meet together to plan, share information drawn from data, record keeping and observations and consider how students are identified for additional academic interventions. The principal is aware that finding time for collaborative planning across all service providers is an area she would wish to improve further.

Record keeping from classroom work is used alongside interim testing and teacher assessments to check on the impact of instruction and the curriculum and to plan for next steps. However, the effectiveness of how teachers collect and use all such data to effectively focus their planning is variable. The school is aware of this and is providing guidance and support, for example, through professional development opportunities and through the deployment of the literacy and mathematics coaches.

The academic intervention team meets with the assistant principal to discuss the progress of individuals identified for further support and to use their specialist knowledge to make informed decisions about next steps for each student. The school has pin-pointed the identification of students for academic interventions as a current area for further strengthening, but the Comprehensive Educational Plan does not make clear exactly what needs to be improved or how success will be measured. The extended day classes are also used, following teacher recommendations, for specific additional support for student needs but the school has found few opportunities, as yet, to track and monitor the impact of this strategy as a whole.

The school tries hard to involve parents in the work of the school through the parent teacher association, the school leadership team, workshops and events but attendance is variable. More positively, however, there is good attendance at parent consultation evenings. Parents express their appreciation of their children’s teachers and the concern shown for the whole child. The principal is very aware of the needs of children within this multicultural community. Teachers reinforce the importance of this element of the school’s work when they speak of their pride in the support the school gives to individual students.

**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 curriculum is mapped to meet mandated requirements and uses guidance from the Everyday Mathematics program and support from Teachers’ College to organize coverage in the core content areas of English language arts and mathematics. Opportunities are also provided to learn about social studies, science and music and sometimes, art.

Teachers look at the mapped curriculum as a whole every year to make any amendments needed and keep an eye on further changes needed to adjust to students’ needs at ongoing grade team meetings. New programs are introduced to support identified needs and differentiation of the curriculum is provided through academic intervention strategies. For example, the school recently introduced ‘Great Leaps’ in order to provide suitable materials for the extended day classes and the Wilson program is being used to assist students who need a highly structured approach to basic reading and spelling skills. Useful training and support in the use of this latter program is being provided for the academic intervention team by a colleague specifically trained in its use.

Budgeting, scheduling, and staffing decisions are proficiently made overall. The school provides a number of opportunities to support student progress through academic intervention services, the deployment of support staff to identified needs across classes and grades and through the extended school. In addition, students are offered the opportunity to attend summer and Saturday School at another venue, if this seems appropriate. However, opportunities are sometimes lost in the classroom to extend students’ thinking through questioning or to differentiate the curriculum through task or by adapting the lesson approach for the ability and needs of students. The principal is aware that some teachers need further support in using appropriate differentiation in their practice to best meet student needs.

Any student absence is appropriately monitored in a number of ways including telephone calls home, letters if further absence occurs and record keeping by teachers. Incentives such as certificates and award assemblies are used to encourage positive attitudes to regular attendance. Teachers know their students well and are concerned for the development and support of the whole child. There are very good relationships between students and adults and the school is secure place in which to learn. Classrooms are orderly places and bulletin boards in communal areas celebrate learning and achievement. Students generally behave well and respond readily to their teachers personally and during instruction. They talk of their appreciation of the education the school provides and the care teachers give.

**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 knows the school community, staff and students very well indeed and she is well-respected by all. Staff feel supported by each other and appreciate that the principal and assistant principal are approachable and helpful.

The structure of meetings enables grade teams to meet together to work collaboratively and teachers to meet for common preparation. Professional development opportunities are provided from a number of sources such as Teachers' College, from courses provided within the local school district and from 'turn-keying' information from such attendance to others. In addition, the literacy and mathematics coaches support staff through their attendance at meetings and in the classroom setting. Colleagues share good practice with each other through modeling and visiting each other's classrooms. The staff are surveyed to gather their perceived needs for further professional development. Classroom observation is carried out as required by the principal and assistant principal and feedback points are given verbally and in written form. Informal visits and walk-throughs are also undertaken and these are used to guide and support staff. However, links from school priority goals to professional development and classroom observation are not always clear and explicit nor recorded as part of development planning.

Staff are selected by interviews usually conducted by the principal. The focus is upon seeking staff who are collaborative, have experience of teaching approaches in line with the school's and who are familiar with teaching in a similar community. The principal can confirm that questioning does not usually explicitly ask about applicants' capacity to use data meaningfully to support student achievement.

The school routinely takes the opportunity to utilize partnerships with a number of organizations to provide enrichment to the curriculum and support for student development in a variety of ways. One example is Leadership, Education and Athletics in Partnership which provides experience with music, dance and art.

**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 undeveloped.**

The Comprehensive Educational Plan contains some goals for school improvement but these are not specifically measurable. Although the principal, cabinet and staff team check on student progress and achievement data as it emerges throughout the year, the plan does not make it sufficiently clear how progress towards key goals will be monitored or evaluated or success recognized. Strategies to effect the changes indicate lack of precision and do not link clearly to other school systems and structures such as professional development or classroom observation. The plan is made available to teachers but there is a lack of focus and inconsistency in their understanding of the school's priorities. The school has a long way to go to make the plan a relevant tool which can influence the development of the curriculum and instruction and provide a meaningful focus for classroom practice.

Staff keep records and discuss data, assessments and their observations. They recommend students for academic intervention and progress is kept under review. However, the principal knows that some teachers need further support in understanding how data can be used to directly influence strategies and developments and in the confident, responsive subsequent differentiation and alignment of their practice to meet students' needs. Recent steps forward with approaches to data analysis are beginning to add to the ongoing professional development provided.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Hillside School (PS 54)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>	<b>X</b>		

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		<b>X</b>	
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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>	<b>X</b>		
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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>	<b>X</b>		
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.	<b>X</b>		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>	<b>X</b>		

\* 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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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.	<b>X</b>		
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.	<b>X</b>		
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		<b>X</b>	
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.		<b>X</b>	
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.	<b>X</b>		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>	<b>X</b>		

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>	X		