



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Old South School

Public School 063

**90-15 Sutter Avenue
Queens
NY 11417**

Principal: Deidra Graulich

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Reviewer: Nick Butt

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

Old South School Magnet for the Arts has an enrollment of 1285 students, covering grades kindergarten through 5. The population comprises 49% Hispanic, 31% Asian, 11% White and 9% Black students. There are 8% special education students. Thirteen percent of students are English language learners. After English, the main language spoken is Spanish. The school receives Title 1 funding for 64% of its students. Student attendance, at 93%, is below the average for similar and City schools.

Through a Federal grant, the school has developed a thriving arts program featuring instrumental music and the visual and dramatic arts. Special education students are taught mainly in self-contained classes and integrated with general education students for some periods of the day. The principal is in her fourth year and was previously an assistant principal at the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal gives excellent leadership and inspires the whole school community to work hard for success.
- There is a very strong team spirit among all staff focused on achieving the school's aims and goals, which engenders consistency in approach and positive outcomes for students.
- The school's arts program enriches students' experiences and builds their confidence.
- Outstanding professional development underpins the work of the school, tailored exactly to the needs of staff in fulfilling their aims.
- Instruction is differentiated very well across the school to engage students fully and to meet their differing needs.
- The school uses its budget very effectively to ensure teachers have all the resources they need and to keep staffing levels high where support is needed most.
- The school's cabinet and teachers make extremely effective use of data to devise plans for improvement and to evaluate progress against their goals.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning and behave very well as a result of the care and respect they are shown.
- The high quality support for special education students and English language learners ensures they make great strides in their learning.
- Parents are actively involved in the life of the school and value the information they receive about how well their children are doing.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve attendance further by monitoring absences closely and investigating immediately any that are unexplained.
- Continue to develop the curriculum through devising more inter-disciplinary units that strengthen the content area taught.
- Develop students' skills further in evaluating their work and engaging in discussions about learning.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

This outstanding school offers its students a high quality education within a caring environment where each individual is known and valued. The principal's burning vision for excellence ignites its work, with teachers relishing the opportunities they are given to grow as professionals. Particularly effective professional development ensures that teaching is consistently good in every classroom. This means that all students make rapid progress and their results compare very favorably with those of similar schools. Parents recognize the growth in their children's achievement and value the way they are challenged. One said, "My son's wheels are always spinning!"

The use of data is a particular strength of the school, with teachers having a thorough understanding of their students' progress. They collaborate very effectively at grade and subject level in setting goals and measuring the impact of their plans on student achievement. The administration and coaches play a key role in assuring the school maintains its superior performance through constantly evaluating the effect of interventions. They promote an open dialogue with all staff about how things can be improved further. The school is working hard to raise attendance levels, but recognizes that more can be done to follow up absence as soon as it occurs.

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 gathers a wealth of data using commercial systems and assessments that teachers have devised themselves, as well as analyzing carefully results from State and City-wide tests. All this information is logged centrally using electronic systems. It is also available in each classroom as a data portfolio, which teachers are using constantly to plan instruction for groups of students and individuals. The data is gone over with a fine toothcomb by the administration, each of whom has a responsibility for particular grades, and by subject coaches. They look for trends in performance at class, grade and subject level, and make comparisons within groups and more widely with similar schools. The same degree of rigor is applied to measuring the progress of special education students and English language learners. As a result of this endeavor, teachers and administrators have an excellent understanding of the performance of each student and what needs to be done next for them to succeed. They take into consideration the progress of students from different ethnic backgrounds, boys and girls, and of higher-achieving students. The principal upgrades the systems regularly so that the information is more clearly presented and offers up more data which can be used to drive forward improvement. This year the Writing and Reading Assessment Program (WRAP) has been introduced, showing at a glance how students in different classes are performing compared with their peers. These data-rich processes have had an enormous impact on student outcomes, with the proportion achieving levels three and four rising significantly.

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.

Teachers have such a good understanding from the data of how well their students are performing that they ensure that plans for the next steps in their learning are tailored exactly to their needs. They involve students in discussing their progress and share their levels with them. The school has begun devising rubrics that are appropriate for the students to use so that they can evaluate their own achievement. As a result of these imaginative approaches all students make good progress, including special education students, whose individual education plans map out the necessary steps for them to improve. Teachers meet together frequently at grade and subject level to compare results and monitor progress against plans. The administration and coaches are able to identify areas where a wider focus would benefit a grade or the whole school. Child study group meetings involve a wide range of professionals in setting goals for students facing particular difficulties. The school’s strong team of guidance counselors, paraprofessionals, academic intervention services and other specialist support teachers ensure that those with the greatest need receive the most help. As a result, the school’s number of referrals to support services has fallen considerably.

The whole school community is galvanized by the principal and her excellent team of assistant principals into pursuing the very best for the students. Teachers commented how the cry “Kick it up a notch!” reverberates around the establishment as expectations are set ever higher. Parents noted the rapid progress their children were making and felt equal partners with staff in developing their children’s learning. They are kept very well informed about the curriculum that is being taught, and how their children are doing. A good range of workshops and open days enables parents to find out more about the work of the school and how they can help their children at home.

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 has selected a curriculum that is relevant for its students and gives them the best possible grounding in literacy and numeracy skills. Students have significant involvement in their own learning in literacy lessons, through guided reading groups and literature circles. In math they think carefully about the processes they are using to arrive at a solution. The school is starting to devise its own inter-disciplinary units, such as in grade 4, on immigration, which takes a social studies theme and develops students’ skills and understanding in other content areas. The curriculum is enriched through the arts program and other special projects such as robotics in grade 5. Students are taught ballroom dancing and have many opportunities to use their musical, artistic and dramatic talents.

Instruction is extremely well differentiated to match the needs of the students based on careful analysis of the data. Teachers meet together with coaches and the administration

to discuss the performance of their classes and are held accountable for meeting their challenging goals. Special education students and English language learners have done particularly well because of tightly-structured instruction, with very few now working at level one. All students are highly engaged by the good quality instruction they receive. They have a real enthusiasm for learning and behave impeccably well both in classrooms and around the school. One student said, "I get to learn and to put my feelings into it." Intelligent budgeting ensures that scheduling and staffing decisions are geared precisely towards achieving the best possible student outcomes. The principal has arranged for extra teachers to push in for guided reading groups so that more students have adult support, and classes are kept small in the lower grades so that students have more teacher time.

Relationships across the school are outstanding. Parents were impressed how willing staff were "to go the extra mile" for their students. One commented, "They make it their business to really know every child." Students appreciate all that the staff do for them and know there is always someone they can turn to for help. The school keeps its attendance under constant review and has made inroads into reducing tardiness, but absence is still greater than in similar schools. It is aware of a greater need to follow-up as soon as the student misses school so that parents are fully aware of the importance of regular attendance.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

Professional development is at the heart of all the school does. The principal has ensured that outstanding support and guidance is available for all staff both internally from the administrators, coaches and teachers' center facilitator, and from external consultants. There is a continuous dialogue about how the school can be even more successful and teachers are extremely eager to develop their skills further. A teacher said, "This school is everything I thought it would be and more. It makes every day rewarding." The principal is careful only to select those staff that will share her vision, and prefers to take on teachers who can be mentored and developed from the start. Weekly workshops for teachers new to the school give them a comprehensive induction into its policies and procedures and enable them to become part of a strong team.

In every classroom the positive impact of professional development is apparent, with teachers adopting new techniques and growing in confidence as they see their students progressing well. The introduction of literature circles is an example where giving students more autonomy in their learning has aided their love of reading and improved their writing. Administrators and coaches analyze data to identify where professional development would be helpful, and also use observations from their regular monitoring of instruction to make decisions about priorities for support. The principal and other senior leaders carry out systematic checks on the quality of teaching, while also encouraging teachers to observe one another's practice. This approach ensures consistency of good practice across the school and openness to new ideas. Regular team meetings at every level give cohesion to this work and enable administrators and teachers to review their goals and to make any necessary adjustments to plans.

The school runs efficiently and successfully because everybody is clear about their role and because the principal is held in such high regard by the whole school community. Her

enthusiasm for her work has lit a flame of commitment and dedication that sweeps through the entire building. People are willing to give of their best because they know they will be supported to the hilt and their contribution recognized. Visitors to the school comment on its happy and purposeful atmosphere, and there are many of them because of the very strong links the school enjoys with other organizations in furthering its academic aims. These include Arts Horizon, Queens College, Carnegie Hall and Vision Education and Media.

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.

Students make accelerated progress because planning is such an integral part of the work of the school, and frequent adjustments are made to plans in the light of regular evaluations based on the latest data. The Comprehensive Education Plan is an incisive working document that sets out clear action plans at grade and subject level. The school leadership team maintains an overview of its successful implementation, with interim updates from the principal on progress. Other administrators take responsibility for different sections of the plan, and these are discussed at grade and study group meetings. There is a high degree of flexibility built into the strong structure, so that as new information comes in it can be assimilated and immediate changes made. For example, observations of guided reading revealed a need to focus on students' comprehension skills and a new plan for training teachers in developing these was included.

The cabinet is highly skilled at using data to make comparisons across classes and with similar schools, while at the same time gaining an especially clear understanding about the progress of individual students. This means they are very well informed when they discuss interventions with teachers and measure the impact of prior support on student achievement. As one assistant principal commented, "If one thing isn't working we'll try another thing!" Teachers not only know about the needs of each student in their classroom, but know how this relates to the performance of the grade and the school as a whole. They take a real interest in the progress of former students as they move to higher grades. They are fully aware of the school's aims and goals and their participation in achieving them. In this sense the school works as a well-oiled machine, and students benefit greatly from the direction and support it gives them.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Old South School (PS 063)	∅	✓	+
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