



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Steinway School

Public School 084

**22- 45 41 Street
Queens
NY 11105**

Principal: John A. Buffa

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 84, also known as the Magnet School of Global Arts and Learning, is located in the heart of Astoria, Queens, near Steinway Street. For this reason it is known as the Steinway School. This school has a population of 390 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 5. The school's student population is made up of 42% White, 33% Hispanic, 20% Asian and others and 4% Black. Approximately 14% of the population is English language learners which is similar to City school averages.

Approximately 12% are special education students, which is similar to City schools. Special education students receive the full continuum of services including Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS), instruction in an integrated inclusion class, instruction in self-contained classes and related services including speech and language, hearing, counseling, physical therapy and occupational therapy.

The school's attendance rate of 94.6% is higher than City schools. At 65%, more students are Title 1 eligible than in City schools and so the school receives Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principal are capable, accessible, experienced and respected leaders.
- The teachers are hard working, experienced, responsible and reflective.
- The culture of the school is welcoming and collegial, appreciative of the diverse community in which it is placed.
- The students are respectfully engaged in learning and dedicated to being productive, serious citizens of their school.
- High expectations are the norm for the students and staff of this school.
- Parent workshops focus on how to help your child with literacy and mathematics skills, as well as support respectful relationships and trust between staff and parents.
- Every student takes music and art as regular classes which are fully integrated into the curriculum.
- Technology is being thoughtfully and effectively integrated into the curriculum so students are becoming engaged researchers.
- Strong partnerships with organizations and community groups provide good enrichment opportunities for the students.
- Systems are in place to ensure that student data is analyzed and generally used effectively by most members of the staff.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to build a culture of collaboration through scheduling and formalizing inter-visitations amongst the staff.
- Deepen the capacity of teachers to use data as part of the normal, expected practice to differentiate and customize instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- Continue a pro-active approach to professional development planning, ensuring that all training provides staff with the identified skills to fully achieve the school goals and targets.
- Improve communication with parents and students so that they know precisely what they have to do to increase achievement and can articulate why goals and targets have been set.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Steinway School is an intimate, diverse, well organized and smoothly functioning school. The building has gone through extensive building renovations leaving it sparkling new on the inside while maintaining its beaux-arts style architecture on the outside. The teachers know the children well and the students feel well cared for and appreciated. The principal has implemented systems for data analysis which have helped the staff understand the needs of all of its students in a more systematic way. The result has been steady improvements in instruction and student achievement. There is still some work to do to encourage parental involvement in all aspects of the school's work. While teachers benefit from well-organized professional development, opportunities for them to watch each other teach and share good practice have only just started. Students have started to be more involved in evaluating their goals and so are still learning what they need to do to improve their achievements.

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.

As soon as the principal and assistant principal arrived, they set to work to analyze the data regarding students, classes and grades. It became clear that English language learners and special education students were not making the progress they should. The school has taken steps to remedy the situation and there are early signs of success. Each teacher has a data book, organized into separate sections and containing data related to student performance. A "think tank" of teachers working with the assistant principal and teachers in grade conferences agreed to keep standardized testing data, writing samples, conference notes and teacher observations, classroom tests and the Princeton Review interim assessments.

Teachers access data from a range of sources to gain a secure understanding of the students they teach. Portfolios of student work shows progress in a range of subjects. Collecting this data and having the time and space to analyze it and therefore make it useful is new to this school. However, the systems are in place and the dedication and support for accessing them have been working fairly well. The school now looks closely at data to evaluate how well different groups of students are performing and making progress including different ethnic, gender and ability groups. The school is proud that although some had difficulty, all of the Hispanic students took and passed the science test. As a result, the principal put in an after school class this year to support science proficiency throughout the school.

There is an ongoing effort made to compare how the school is doing in comparison to similar schools and to the schools in the City. The school checks itself using the school

report card in order to understand where it stands with respect to similar schools. It finds itself to be competitive with neighborhood schools. The school has not yet begun to compare results across grades and by class. Students are compared within and across classes. This process is new to the school, but is being used with confidence to predict how to move forward in the future.

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 school follows the goals crafted into the Comprehensive Education Plan by the school leadership team. The implementation begins with the grade meetings where goals are developed for the next year during June planning. These goals focus on students, classes and grades and plans inform the action required to meet the needs of the students.

Teachers use informal observations of students, Princeton Review, E-CLAS, E-PAL, running records, and conferencing to establish interim goals and make diagnostic assessments of progress. They establish benchmarks in the Voyager Passport system for students who are at risk.

The school’s and classroom expectations are developed at the beginning of the year by the administration and teachers. A meeting of teachers and parents early in the year enables the school and class goals to be shared. The principal meets with every parent and student when they enter the school. At that interview the principal explains the school’s high expectations for each student. Parents appreciate the meeting and are already familiar with what is expected of them when their child starts at the school.

It is clear that English language learners and special needs students are not doing as well as other students. It is also apparent from data that the school needs to improve the goals and plans for these groups of students. The school is at the beginning of this process. Systems are now in place to understand what the needs of these students are and instruction is starting to be differentiated more effectively.

The school hopes that through its parent advisory cabinet it can bring in special interest groups of parents and discover what keeps parents back from attending meetings. This group has sent out surveys to parents asking what their concerns are in the hope of being more inclusive. The school has not yet succeeded in providing space for under-represented parents, although it has begun to send out information in multiple languages. In this way the school hopes to engage all parents in the process.

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.

This school uses the mandated curriculum to create the pacing calendar. There is a big effort to support students in writing and literacy from the early grades. There is a clear understanding among the staff that the best teaching occurs when students are active and

lively. However, some classes are still teacher dominated and evidence of students being actively involved in constructing their own learning is not always apparent. Based on the data, one goal of the school became to provide an enrichment program that is open to all children in this community. An example of this is the Robotics classes in fifth grade, where robotic machines made with Lego parts are produced. There is also evidence of grade appropriate literacy projects which incorporate internet research. The music teacher introduces students to reading musical scores and using keyboards. In these ways the school has included instructional programs that actively engage students and is an example of how staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data.

Teachers are now held accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. However it is clear that this is a slow process and is not true across all classes. Some teachers differentiate instruction carefully and thoughtfully. However, in too many classes teachers deliver the same instructional model to all students regardless of their needs. The school is working to provide 'lunch and learn' opportunities for teachers to develop their capacity to share expertise about how to differentiate instruction. Here the teachers work together to develop rubrics for assessing student work. Some teachers involve students in assessing their own work, but others do not.

The school has used its budget thoughtfully to provide the students with the specialty teaching that will enrich the academic program significantly for all students. In the same way, by using the budget intelligently the school has matched staffing to the needs of the school and this has accommodated many of the various needs of all students.

For the most part the teachers appear to know and respect their students well. The students speak about how their teachers are nice and how they are challenged in their classes. The students talk about how almost every teacher will "review the work until we get it." If they are worried about anything students know who to ask to fix their worries.

Attendance is checked daily and rigorously. If students are absent the school has a policy of saving their homework and class work. Students are expected to bring a note or have a family member phone explaining why they did not attend school.

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 is respected and found to be accessible by all constituencies. Parents feel he has an open door policy to parents and is willing to talk with them about any issues they bring to the table. Teachers find the principal to be supportive and a visible presence in the school. They believe he encourages them to improve their skills and attend professional development. They find him encouraging and understanding. The school runs very smoothly. The procedures are clear to the staff, the parents and the students.

This school has included teachers in the process of choosing new staff for the school. Consequently, the school has embraced all of the teachers who are new to it. The staff shares high expectations for its students and in this way they are invested in ensuring that any new teachers will be supported. The new teachers are flexible and are making good use of to the Teachers' College reading and writing project. The support of coaches and the modeling of lessons by lead teachers and the assistant principal are enabling teachers to become fluent with this methodology. Consequently, the professional development is

well supported by the internal expertise of the staff. This process remains an informal rather than formal one in the school. Opportunities for teachers to visit each other classes to watch each other teach are not formally scheduled.

The administrators walk through the school on a daily basis to touch base with every teacher. Each visit has a clear focus including checking to see if structures are in place, how much students are progressing and how effectively students are being helped by the teachers in conference times. The administrators and teachers have follow up conversations which teachers feel are generally supportive.

Planning and evaluation of results takes place in grade level teams. The assistant principal runs these meetings and keeps careful records of the progress of students on the grade. During grade conferences the teachers go over the student work together. They bring evidence of what is being accomplished in their classes, share and compare the work. In this way there is an opportunity to do hands on talking in tangible ways.

The school has a worthwhile partnership with the Philharmonic which supports its academic goals well. The students enjoy their music classes and bring what they learn in music to the discipline they need to persevere and do well in other areas.

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.

Teachers use data from Princeton Review strands to monitor progress and adjust programs. Every six months the academic intervention team looks at the results of special education students on practice exams. Decisions are taken about whether the school is meeting the needs of these students or whether there should be a change in program or services provided. Where the school sees students are failing on the interim assessment data, decisions are taken on how to support them. The benefits of taking these interim assessments have yet to be shown since these systems are relatively new to the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Steinway School (PS 84)	∅	✓	+
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	