



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

School in the Gardens

Public School 101

**2 Russell Place
Queens
NY 11375**

Principal: Ronnie Feder

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Reviewer: Lysbeth Bradley

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School in the Gardens is an average sized neighborhood elementary school serving 624 students from pre-kindergarten through to grade 6. The school is an integral and valued part of the community. Most students live nearby and walk to school, although a small number of special education students travel by bus. The school does not receive Title 1 funding.

The school population is very stable and includes 48.7% White, 28.2% Asian, 15.7% Hispanic and 7.4% Black students. The school admits a larger proportion of immigrants than similar schools and these students are quickly assimilated into mainstream classes. Five percent of students are English language learners. Two percent of special education students are taught in self-contained classes and a further 11% are taught in mainstream classes.

Attendance in 2005 was 94.4 % which matches that of similar schools. Absence is largely the result of parents taking their children on holiday.

The school has had a number of significant staffing changes in the last two years with the appointment of a new principal in February 2005, followed by the appointment of coaches for literacy and mathematics. The building exceeds its official capacity by over 8%. Although the administration makes use of every available space, the older students work in cramped conditions, and the administration is forced to make choices between cluster subjects that require specialized accommodation.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal demonstrates high quality leadership and is tenacious in driving the school forward.
- Students develop into well-rounded individuals with a love of learning.
- There is genuine collaboration and collegiality among staff for mutual support and professional development.
- Students are proud of their school, play an active part in its development and enjoy being involved in the wider community.
- The administration has a good grasp of the school's strengths and those aspects where more work is needed.
- Students are enthused by increasing breadth in the curriculum and the school wide enrichment program for older students.
- Overall achievement has risen yearly but the school is not complacent in striving for an increase in the proportion of level four students.
- There is a strong partnership between parents and the school which is of great benefit to the students.

What the school needs to improve

- Make consistent use of formative assessment to differentiate work in lessons, particularly for the most able.
- Use all available data to evaluate the impact of teaching and instructional programs on students' achievement.
- Modify the Comprehensive Education Plan to enable the administration and teachers to monitor and evaluate the impact of their goal setting at regular intervals.
- Make better use of teachers' assessments and interim test results to set individual targets for students and involve them in evaluating their own work.
- Inject the same positive momentum into mathematics as there is in balanced literacy to ensure similar gains in progress.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with a number of strengths.

The school has come a long way in less than two years under the strong and visionary leadership of the new principal who is highly respected. She has formed an excellent working relationship with the assistant principal who complements her style, skills and areas of expertise to a high degree. Although students were achieving well under the former administration, the school had not been alert to the implications of the available data to drive forward the curriculum, to enable teachers to hone their craft or to expand opportunities for the students. As one member of staff said, "She has woken the school up and injected drive and momentum into the development of teaching and the curriculum."

The administration has been effective in managing a significant amount of change by identifying clearly what was needed to move the school forward, by prioritizing new initiatives sensibly, by scheduling staff according to their strengths, by appointing coaches and by providing all members of staff with a wide range of professional development which they had not had access to before.

These building blocks have added breadth and balance to the curriculum, expanded teaching and learning styles, made significant improvement to classroom environments, engendered renewed enthusiasm in key staff and provided many new exciting learning opportunities for students. This is a school where both parents and staff have high expectations of what students can achieve. Through the period of transition there has been no slippage and the proportion of students meeting the standard has risen yearly in both English language arts and mathematics. The school is not complacent, however, and recognizes that in certain grades more effort is needed to increase the proportion of level 4 students, particularly in mathematics.

The administration has a good understanding of where the school's areas for improvement lie and the long-term strategy is clearly mapped out to address these. The recent rate of improvement has been good and the school has a strong capacity for further improvement.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

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

The new administration quickly recognized the importance of data in moving the school forward. As well as making good use of State and City test results, it has also identified which assessment systems provided the best quality information for teachers to enable them to focus on areas of weakness for individual students, classes and grades. The school is highly developed in its utilization of data relating to reading and writing in planning to meet the needs of students who are working at different levels in the same class.

Good use is made of a wide range of information in meeting the needs of special education students and English language learners. Those special education students in self-contained classes receive well targeted support that enables them to make good progress in relation to the goals in their individualized education plans. English language learners make rapid progress because of the strong partnership that is established between home and school and the well thought out interventions which enable them to participate fully in mainstream classes as quickly as possible. The school has not been so assiduous in tracking results in relation to ethnicity and recognizes that the reason for Asian students doing less well in science than they do in English language arts and mathematics has to be explored and remedied.

The new principal made sure from the beginning that the performance of Public School 101 was compared with that of similar schools and has used this as a lever to raise staff expectations. The administration has carefully established benchmark performance for each cohort and is closely tracking the progress of each grade as it moves through the school in relation to the proportion of students at every level. Immediate remedial action is taken should a dip in performance occur.

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 overall.

The school’s first priority has been to raise achievement in English language arts because the proportion of students meeting or exceeding the standard was significantly lower than in mathematics. New methods of assessing students at regular intervals, which align well with State tests, were swiftly identified. Teachers have made good use of the data to target those students who need additional support in understanding and practicing particular skills in reading and writing. The appointment of a literacy coach has been fundamental in enabling teachers to adopt the workshop model and to introduce balanced literacy. Teachers spoke positively about the quality of the support they have received. As a direct result, the school is well on the way to achieving a good level of consistency in the quality of instructional practice in English language arts.

The school makes good use of all available data as well as knowledge of individual students’ particular circumstances to ensure that those students at risk receive targeted support while learning alongside their classmates. This has led to a yearly decrease in the proportion of students failing to meet the standard.

The administration, staff and parents share equally high expectations of what students can achieve both in State tests and in their personal growth. Parents are vocal in expressing their concerns when results in a particular grade do not match their expectations and the school is equally focused on getting to the heart of the matter. Parents play an active part in the development and evaluation of plans as well as in assessing the value of potential programs.

The administration recognizes that although goals are established collaboratively, the outcomes are not set out in sufficient detail with interim goals to enable them to be checked at regular intervals.

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 overall.

The administration has acted in a focused and measured way to introduce balanced literacy and to make adjustments to the mathematics curriculum in order to boost achievement by demanding more active involvement from students. All teachers have worked hard to implement these changes and to understand the implications for teaching and learning. Good strides have been made in providing appropriate work for students of different abilities within the same class, but not all teachers are fully confident in utilizing all the information available to them to challenge the most able. Although students have an understanding of the goals they are aiming for, teachers have not made use of formative assessments and interim test results to set short term targets for individual students at regular intervals or to involve them in evaluating their own work.

The school leadership team makes good use of a wide range of resources. The administration has been creative in the scheduling of staff to enable individual teachers to play to their strengths as well as broadening their understanding of how students progress as they move through the school. This has resulted in an enriched curriculum with content areas such as social studies revitalized by the enthusiasm and expertise of the cluster teacher. It has led to a higher level of engagement among students who are excited by the depth and variety of the learning opportunities they now have. Students speak with particular excitement about the Friday afternoon enrichment program, a view endorsed by parents, some of whom are involved as tutors.

All staff show a high level of care and concern for their students who love coming to school and are always ready to volunteer for additional duties. They treat each other and their teachers with respect and are always ready to help each other learn. Attendance is good but the school continues to raise awareness among parents of the value of 100% attendance. Parents and students have responded well to the school’s strategies for improving punctuality.

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 with well developed aspects.

The principal has earned the respect of students, staff and parents. She has articulated her vision clearly to all members of the school community and is tireless in working to improve learning opportunities for every one of her students. Parents share her determination to develop well rounded students with equal emphasis on academic and personal development. The principal is accessible, always ready to listen, treats all concerns and suggestions seriously and explains her decisions. The administration has worked hard to improve communication at all levels, facilitating times when teachers can meet to plan, evaluate and discuss the needs of individual students. Clear procedures are followed consistently and ensure that the school runs efficiently.

Professional development has been the main vehicle for managing change and is closely aligned with the school’s goals. High expectations are explicit and each appointment is weighed against the school’s goals. The administration has engendered genuine

collaboration and collegiality among staff for mutual support and development. The principal and assistant principal are frequently in classes providing constructive feedback and encouragement and know precisely where to direct resources to achieve a good level of consistent practice within and between grades.

In response to students' lower performance in English language arts, initial efforts were directed successfully at strengthening the literacy curriculum and improving the quality of instruction to boost achievement. The recently appointed mathematics coach has started to work effectively with teachers to deepen their knowledge of the program and to sharpen practice. She is poised to spearhead the school's push for rigorous assessment in mathematics so that the work planned for the most able students challenges them to their limits.

The school makes good use of community organizations and local institutions to broaden students' experiences, particularly in the arts, and also taps into the talents of parents to widen its enrichment program.

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 overall.

The school has good systems in place to keep track of each student's progress and to check that no one is falling behind. At an individual level, there are flexible arrangements to ensure that resources are matched to clearly identified needs. Students emphasized how all their teachers were quick to recognize when they needed help.

The introduction of pre -testing has raised teachers' expectations so that no time is wasted in setting work for students which fails to take account of prior knowledge and skills. Teachers also make use of interim assessments to refocus the work for students of different abilities. They are less adept in taking account of ongoing diagnostic assessment during lessons to fine tune students' next steps in learning in order to accelerate progress.

The administration has made positive changes to the development of the annual Comprehensive Education Plan and has involved staff and parents in goal setting. Action plans relating to each priority include detailed activity, but not all include measurable success criteria to enable the administration, teachers and the school leadership team to evaluate the impact of teaching and instructional programs on students' achievement. Where success criteria are identified, they are not sufficiently specific to enable close monitoring at regular intervals over the course of the year so that plans can be amended and resources reallocated in the light of the most up to date information. Although teams are instrumental in drawing up the action plan relating to their area of responsibility, they are not yet expected to take an active part in evaluating progress in achieving small steps at predetermined intervals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: School in the Gardens (PS101)	∅	✓	+
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	