



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Public School 177

**56-37 188th Street
Queens
NY 11365**

Principal: Kathleen Posa

Dates of review: April 23-25, 2007

Reviewer: Ronnie Solow

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 177 is located in the Fresh Meadows area of Queens. All students at the school are special education students with autism and mental and emotional handicapping conditions. Students range in age from 5 to 21 years approximating grades kindergarten through twelve. The ethnic composition of the school's 458 students includes 42% Black, 26% Hispanic, 19% White, 13% Asian Pacific, and 1% American Indian. English language learners comprise 12% of the students. There are two inclusion classes at nearby schools.

Attendance at the school is 91% and the school receives Title I funding for 59.1% of students. The current principal has only been appointed very recently.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Parents and staff praise the principal's openness, willingness to listen, and administrative skill.
- The principal is highly visible and is already making a leadership impact across the school.
- Rules, regulations and routines are well known and followed by staff and students, leading to smooth running.
- The building is well maintained and decorated with student work samples, providing a stimulating climate.
- Classroom programs incorporate best practices for students with a handicapping condition.
- Budget, scheduling and staffing decisions are based on student needs.
- The administrative team and staff work collaboratively and cooperatively to address student needs.
- Students are treated with respect in order to enhance their self-esteem.
- Youth development activities are age appropriate and extend classroom learning opportunities.
- The staff supports one another in their professional growth and development.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand professional development activities in the collection and use of data to inform classroom practices.
- Refine data collection by cohort, academic program and other areas of interest to set goals and measure progress.
- Continue to develop parental involvement activities to increase participation in the school life of their students.
- Develop additional opportunities for senior staff to share knowledge, skills and expertise.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

In the few weeks since she was appointed, the principal has begun to place her mark on the school. Parents and staff remark how she has reached out and solicited their input about how to improve the school and how to build upon existing, effective practices. She has already developed strategies to strengthen many areas for the coming school year.

The staff and administration work collaboratively with families to assist the students to reach their full potential. The students are well known as individuals to the staff. The functional and vocational emphasis of the educational program is evident throughout the building and students regularly go out into the community to practice and apply skills learned in the classroom. Older students have the opportunity to experience work site programs designed to enhance their functional abilities and interpersonal skills. Younger students are engaged in various programs to increase communication and functional life skills. All programs work through a team approach. The principal and her assistant principals have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for 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.

Data collection activities are centered in the classrooms and used by the teachers to create lessons designed to meet the needs of each class and student. A variety of data is collected and analyzed proficiently. In October, the Brigance Inventories are administered to all students so that performance level benchmarks can be determined and individual education plan objectives developed for the academic year. All but one class of students are classified as having State alternate assessment category. The teachers use specialized tests to capture data on each student, class and cohort within the school, and this is reviewed with the principal and assistant principals. The one standardized testing class utilizes data from the State exams, the Princeton Interim assessment data and behavioral data to assess student progress. Student portfolios travel with the students from year to year so that the new class teacher has the latest progress information.

The school is currently participating in a District 75 reading program pilot, Headsprout, designed for early childhood learners. The data generated from this computerized program is analyzed for progress in development of early reading skills. The school also collects data on their non-verbal students, English language learners, students with health problems such as diabetes, asthma, or seizure disorders, as well as behavioral data. Specific data for the smaller group of female students is not collected. Additional data being collected by the school includes attendance, behavior plan and behavior program information. For the neediest students, portfolio information includes data on functional skill attainment and behavioral skills.

The principal visits other schools in order to learn more about best practices for profoundly handicapped students and to make comparisons of performance. The principal and assistant principals regularly review the data for each class with the teacher in an ongoing, informal schedule.

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.

Each student’s individual education plan and classroom assessment data determines the goals and objectives for their learning. The Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal’s goals and objectives have not previously served as the basis for the class and cohort planning process, though there is now a recognition that this needs to be the case. The principal recognizes the need to create a class, cohort and school data tracking plan. Data does not currently underpin every program, but there is an intention that it will in all future planning. The principal recognizes the importance of teamwork and comprehensive planning to improve student outcomes.

The entire student body exhibits great need. The neediest population is composed of the oldest students in the 6:1:1 program. The test is to provide age appropriate materials and challenging instructional activities for these largely non-verbal adolescents. The school uses a wide variety of data from many sources to set individual goals for building more independence with these students. The standardized testing group receives academic intervention services in mathematics and additional support in English language arts to improve their performance outcomes towards their personal goals.

One highlight of the collaborative planning process is the integrated services program developed at the school. The integration of the interventions and support results in jointly developed goals, coordinated objectives and outcomes. This team effort increases the attainment of the classroom goals and clearly represents the way that all the staff is focused on student improvement.

Parents receive regular communication from the school and are kept well informed. They respond in writing in the daily agenda book. The parent coordinator runs a monthly support group for parents and the guidance staff leads a monthly sibling support group. Translators are present at all school meetings to assist non-English speakers. Non-verbal students make their needs known and communicate through the use of the picture exchange communication system or augmentative devices.

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 selected for each cohort based on best practices. Students in the standardized testing class are taught using the approved City curriculum. Princeton Interim assessment data and the Brigance Inventories guide the teacher’s planning for curriculum modifications according to individual student requirements.

Teachers are held accountable for their instruction. They design their lessons, after completing required assessments, using the Functional Academic Curriculum for Exceptional Students and a variety of specialized additional programs suited to their age and achievement. They adapt materials for non-verbal and pre-literate students. Lessons are differentiated through the use of specific materials and techniques. In the classrooms, areas are established for small group instruction, individual work centers, and independent study areas. Each student has a personal schedule reflecting their daily program. Teachers adapt and reproduce age-appropriate materials using the picture exchange communication system for use in the classroom and at home. Technology is infused into many aspects of the instruction to assist students to become active learners. The classrooms encourage participation and reinforce active learning behaviors. Vocational programs, both in school and at work sites, reinforce the academic and functional aspects of the curriculum through hands-on learning activities and engage students well.

Budget, scheduling and staffing decisions support student needs. There is a unit coordinator, two assistant principals, a curriculum coach and many related service providers and paraprofessionals providing direct services to the students. Structure, routines and procedures are high priorities for students with challenging behavior and are applied consistently. This supports the good relationships evident in the school and provides a sense of safety for students. Attendance is currently at 91% for the year. The attendance committee monitors the improvement program and interventions are swift. A school-wide reward program is in place for excellent and improved 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 proficient.

The school hires staff through a selection committee composed of members from all constituents in the school community. Interview questions are directly related to the job function and use of data in order to ascertain students' skills and the teachers' ability to improve their educational outcomes.

Upon her recent appointment, the principal distributed a professional development needs assessment in order to determine the activities for the remainder of the academic year and the coming year. All new staff receives training in specialized techniques and curriculum programs in order to increase staff capacity. The parent coordinator and guidance counselors have developed an extensive menu of workshops for parents and siblings of the students to enable families to better assist their children.

Teachers are observed formally and informally by the administration. Written reports and post-observation conferences provide feedback and suggested strategies about classroom activities, highlighting the collection and use of data to drive the instructional program. The curriculum coach and other skilled staff members provide assistance in a collegial atmosphere by opening up their classrooms to their peers. This modeling role is now being extended to other experienced teachers.

Teams meet regularly. Grade and faculty conferences are held once a month. The behavior team meets weekly to review the data from the Right Choice program. Cohort teams meet weekly to evaluate curriculum, share lessons and materials and discuss specific program options. The curriculum team examines materials, makes

recommendations and, once approved, orders materials through their monthly meeting. These team meetings serve as a vehicle to identify strengths and areas that need to be addressed and to act upon them in a collaborative and effective manner.

The school is a quiet and orderly learning environment. Rules, regulations and routines are well known by students and staff. The principal is well respected by students, staff and parents who commented on her ability as a supervisor, administrator, special educator, her capacity to improve the school and her willingness to listen, openness to suggestions and availability. The school has developed links with organizations and businesses that support the needs of the students. Work sites support the vocational aspect of the curriculum and allow the older students to transfer these skills to the real world. In-school activities, such as the culinary arts program, copy center, woodworking program, plastics shop and school store provide students with additional vocational environments.

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.

The staff has numerous ongoing conversations about how to improve student outcomes. The data recorded in each classroom is used to determine the needs and next steps in the educational and developmental process for every student. The classroom data serves as the foundation for planning for each student, cohort and the entire school. The attendance plan, behavior modification plans and Right Choice program along with the individual education plan and Brigance Inventories, are scrutinized by the administration to assess their effectiveness and to determine if revisions are necessary. The administration meets with teachers to review classroom data as well as anecdotal records. Modifications to academic and other mandated services are implemented as warranted. The principal follows up with the assistant principals to strategize and plan for each cohort group in the school. The principal recognizes the need to develop a comprehensive review schedule with specific benchmarks for the attainment of goals and dates for the coming year.

Despite her very recent appointment the principal has written realistic and appropriate goals and objectives for the remainder of the current academic year. The school leadership team has been informed about these goals and progress in achieving the goals outlined in the Comprehensive Education Plan. The staff is kept informed through weekly cabinet meetings that include administration, unit coordinators, and committee chairpersons. Data from related service personnel assist teachers in making requests for immediate modifications to the services for each student. A review of the Right Choice behavior modification program indicated that it was not delivering the desired outcomes. Some students always received rewards and others never earned the points. A behavior committee was formed to examine the program and bring recommendations back for strengthening the program. The principal is waiting for their report and recommendations so that revisions can be made for the coming year.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 177	∅	✓	+
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	