



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Holliswood School

Public School 178

**189 - 10 Radnor Road
Queens
NY 11423**

Principal: Diane Hobbs

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Reviewer: Peter Williman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Holliswood School is a small school with a population of 421 students. In September 2006, the school changed its grade range to pre-kindergarten through 6 and is planning to grow to pre-kindergarten through grade 8 by September 2008.

The majority of students come from the immediate community of Holliswood in Jamaica district. White students represent 39.2% of the school population, Asian 35.2%, Black 12.9% and Hispanic 12.7%. Because of the excess capacity in the school, a significant number of special education students are bussed from other areas. The percentage of special education students has increased from 6% in 2005 to 16% in 2006. English language learners account for 4.5% of the school enrollment. The school is not Title 1 eligible.

Attendance is higher than the City average and that of similar schools at approximately 95%.

Built in 1971, the school is well maintained and presents a clean, bright environment with good-sized classrooms. Open hallways have attractive displays of students work. A large gymnasium, cafeteria and auditorium provide additional flexible accommodation. A spacious library is well furnished but has only a small collection of books. Libraries to support reading instruction are, however, well stocked. The schoolyard is very large and provides for recreation and sports. A specific area provides very good quality play equipment for younger students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school uses a range of data to track the progress of students, to inform instruction and to create student groupings with significant emphasis on English language arts.
- Teachers know their students well and use a range of techniques to ensure that their next steps in learning, especially in English language arts, are soundly based on available data.
- The school places high value on progress in reading and has developed a comprehensive school-wide system to monitor progress.
- The principal and assistant principal work effectively together and have a clear grasp of the potential of quantitative and qualitative school data to inform school development.
- The principal, in her three years in office, has improved the school culture through her perceptive leadership and is committed both to high standards and to maintaining a broad curriculum.
- The school has a caring, community ambience much valued by parents and fostered by the 'open door' policy of the principal and staff.
- Professional development strategies are evolving to create a reflective learning culture in which teachers engage spontaneously in school and personal enrichment.
- The school, supported by the Parent Teacher Association, broadens its curriculum by offering specific opportunities and challenges to students through focused enrichment activities.
- The school makes very high quality provision for special education students.

What the school needs to improve

- Compare the performance of groups to identify gaps in performance and to set measurable goals to raise achievement where necessary.
- Establish a baseline assessment from which to set challenging, measurable goals for individuals, groups, classes and grades.
- Be more rigorous in specifying outcomes and interim goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan to enable progress towards these goals to be monitored and evaluated.
- Make use of qualitative and quantitative data to measure the impact of new programs and initiatives on individuals, groups, grades and cohorts.
- Develop more detailed and consistent systems for recording data in mathematics to inform instruction.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The Holliswood School is well led, well organized and small enough to provide a family environment in which students are well known to all and nurtured. The school has been successful in developing a strong, collaborative culture at all levels to enable more students to achieve levels 3 and 4 than in similar and City-wide schools. Teachers know their students well and are generally meticulous in identifying next steps in instruction.

Parents are welcomed and fully involved in the further development of academic and social opportunities for their children and in supporting the school. The commitment to an enriched curriculum is evident in the priority the school gives to ensuring breadth of content but equally so in the programs and projects the school adopts to match individual learning needs. The school is proficient in using a wide range of assessments to track students' progress and to clarify areas of the curriculum for improvement, particularly in English language arts.

Overall evaluation demonstrates that the school is not sufficiently robust in its analysis of data. Further, data and assessments are not integrated sufficiently into planning to identify challenging and measurable objectives or to monitor the progress of plans for curriculum development. This takes on even greater significance as the school grows by adding grades 7 and 8.

The school has a very active Parent Teacher Association. Great pride is taken in the care for students' safety, demonstrated in the precision of the school's morning 'Stop and Drop' arrangements.

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.

The school uses a wide range of assessments from which to derive information to track the progress of students. This position reflects significant development during the current principal's period of office. In addition to State and City tests, the school selects commercially produced assessments and published programs to identify specific skill weaknesses in English language arts and to a lesser extent in mathematics. Teachers formulate their own assessments to gauge students' acquisition of knowledge and skills. These tests are submitted to the principal for authorization before use to give some quality assurance in content and level.

The administration analyzes assessments thoroughly, sometimes manually, to identify issues and priorities for instruction. Teachers use assessments effectively to level students on the reading program and students are monitored individually to check their progress against expected levels for their grade. The school has used data to adjust its

focus, as the profile of school scores in State tests identified English language arts as a higher priority.

In their analysis of data the administration uses current information well to identify students' levels, strengths and weaknesses, particularly in English language arts. Teachers track improvement in students' achievement to understand the point they have reached. The assessment program is scheduled appropriately to monitor progress. For example, literacy skills are assessed in the fall and again in the spring to provide feedback on progress. The annual school report data demonstrates progress in scores for all groups, especially for special education students and English language learners. However, at the moment there is no setting of aspirational and challenging end-of-year goals using baseline assessment against which progress can be measured as the year goes on, which could challenge students to achieve their very best. Such long term goals and evaluation could support the progress of individuals, groups, classes and grades.

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 has been successful in developing a strong collaborative culture at all levels to promote high standards. Teachers use running records and rubrics in their day-to-day instruction effectively. The school uses data analysis appropriately to identify priorities and set goals. However, the school's strategies to achieve goals do not take sufficient account of all available information. Although the Comprehensive Education Plan identifies what will be done to achieve the school's goals, there is insufficient rigor in the way outcomes or levels of achievement are specified to enable progress towards these goals to be monitored and evaluated. The school has established a broad database from which to set targets at individual, class, grade and school level. This is particularly effective in identifying and supporting those students most at risk. Equally, its assessments enable clarification of specific objectives or sub-goals.

Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress. They quote examples of successful and agreed strategies that have led to significant improvements. Parents welcome the introduction of 'Honor' classes to increase student aspirations. A mathematics team enables students to compete with other students at a very high level for their age. Equally, parents are appreciative of the care the school takes to communicate with them, often electronically, to support progress and to integrate special education students.

Teachers know their students well and have detailed databases in their records and conference notes, particularly in English language arts, to identify next learning steps. They share their high expectations with students. Students are efficiently matched to the leveled reading program and there are clear expectations of the progress they should make.

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 keeps the curriculum under close review and constantly seeks new programs and methodologies, which enable students to be matched with appropriate levels of work within the mandated curriculum. Prominence has been given to art and music to expand the breadth of the curriculum. The Parent Teacher Association augments programs with after-school sessions of art, drama, cooking and sport sessions and also helps with the funding of additional equipment to support the activities.

Teachers take responsibility for planning their instruction through their close observation of students and through conferencing, which determines the mapping of paths through the curriculum for individual students. Students reciprocate in their appreciation of the quality of care, support and instruction they receive. Teachers value the range of programs and projects the school has adopted to support the differentiation of instruction and to accelerate learning. For example, this is clearly illustrated in reading in the computer-generated phonics programs followed by special education students in which each student works on a task specific to that individual’s next steps in learning. These students are fully engaged and make good advances in their learning. General education students enjoy a reading program which has built-in assessment to level group and individual learning. There is a consistency of practice in instruction and assessment across general and special education to facilitate appropriate transfer and integration. English language arts has been a priority area for curriculum development but the school recognizes that, as new assessments become available, planning and differentiation of instruction in mathematics need further attention.

The principal has a clear focus on the school’s stated goals in making choices about budgeting, staffing and scheduling. For example, the school funds a band coach for two days a week and this not only provides students with a wide range of instrumental options but increases their opportunity and aspiration to perform within and beyond the school. Literacy lessons are blocked in periods of 90 minutes to structure lessons more effectively. Teacher preparation periods are matched to facilitate team meetings. Funding supports teacher training for the school’s adopted specialist teaching programs.

Teachers know their students very well and have built good relationships which mean that students have someone to turn to if they have a concern. Students behave well and enjoy learning. In addition, their parents support the school to ensure that attendance remains consistently high. Attendance is rigorously pursued.

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.

The principal is well respected and has established effective systems that ensure the smooth running of the school. She has demonstrated a determination to maintain the high standards of skill among the staff in making recent appointments and equally to complement the range of expertise within the staff. The assistant principal was in part selected for curriculum management skills. Mathematics is well placed to meet the

challenge of the school's expansion to middle grades with a new and experienced specialist teacher. Art is now led by a fine-arts specialist.

There is impressive vibrancy and relevance in the well-prepared voluntary focus groups to which teachers give their time to assist their professional development. Teachers share and compare their results and instruction at grade team meetings. Whole school professional development has given confidence to the teaching staff to use writing rubrics and to have a greater understanding of standards across the grades. Collaborative team teachers in mixed grade classes work extremely well together and have much to offer from their experiences of sharing data and planning for group instruction. Inter-visitations have stimulated discussion on instruction and understanding of learning. Teachers have been trained and are confident to use information technology for data management.

The principal has a comprehensive knowledge of her teaching team and has fostered school cohesion with sensitivity and success. She makes effective use of formal observations and informal walkthroughs to pinpoint strengths and areas for development. Parents and students value the accessibility of the principal and assistant principal. Their open style of leadership is conducive to purposeful and constructive informal and formal observation to support teachers and to develop instruction. The school makes good use of the services of commercial companies to enrich instruction.

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.

Although the school has a good idea of its own strengths and areas for development, the plans are not sufficiently articulated to ensure that information from all available data is integrated to provide interim and substantiated judgments on the progress towards end of year challenging goals. Adjustments are made to curricula and instruction but these are not rigorously tracked through data. The school does have assessments in place which provide diagnostic information to reveal the degree of student progress and the areas of weakness in English language arts and in mathematics over the course of the school year. These are scheduled at appropriate times to make the use of data purposeful. Changes to instructional practice can, therefore, be made at class and grade level to meet individual student needs but this planning is not sufficiently formalized.

The principal scrutinizes the available data to make judgments of the work of individual classes. The school has the capacity to correlate its planning with assessment to make sound re-evaluations of those plans as they progress and to adapt them accordingly because of the quality and quantity of data available.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Holliswood School (PS 178)	∅	✓	+
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	