



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Castlewood School**

**Public School 186**

**72 Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11426**

**Principal: Dolores Troy-Quinn**

**Dates of review: November 14 - 15, 2006**

**Reviewer: Rowena Onions**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public school 186, The Castlewood School is an elementary school serving an ethnically diverse population in Bellerose, Queens. It has 331 kindergarten to grade 5 students. Students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. The largest proportion of students, 40% comes from Asian families, with 28% being White, 17% Hispanic, and 15% Black. Seven percent of students are special education students. There are a small proportion of English language learners 2%. The proportion of students, 21% known to be Title 1 eligible is slightly above that of similar schools but much lower than that of the City as a whole. The proportion of students recently entering the country is 5%, with most of these students coming from India. Attendance rates at the school are slightly lower than those for similar schools, but higher than those for the City as a whole.

The school has been in existence for 54 years and shares a building with PS224, which is a district 75 school. The schools enjoy a close relationship that benefits both school communities. Some students from PS224 are educated alongside students from PS186 in inclusion classes.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is a very effective leader who has high expectations of students and staff, and who commands a respect that ensures these are met.
- A strong staff team work together well to provide effective education for the students.
- The school respects and values each student as an individual, enabling each to develop their confidence and enjoy school.
- Assessment data is used well to promote progress in English language arts.
- Data is used very well to program work for special needs students, helping them to make good progress.
- The professional development of staff is linked very well to the school improvement priorities.
- There is a very productive partnership between parents and the school that actively promotes student progress.
- The effective partnership between the school and others, particularly PS224, enables the school to extend and improve its instruction and the curriculum.
- The very high profile maintained by the principal around the school, provides an attention to detail that successfully ensures the smooth running of the school and promotes school improvement.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue work to develop the use of assessment data in mathematics.
- Ensure that students are clear about what they are learning in each lesson and how they will know that they have been successful.
- Develop the knowledge of a wider group of staff in the use of data and in monitoring the work of the school.
- Streamline the recording of assessment data to assist its wider use by staff.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a proficient school with aspects of its work that are well developed.**

The school provides its students with a secure and welcoming place to learn and develop. Each student is known and valued as an individual and is made to feel 'special'. Data is used well, especially in English language arts, to provide a picture of student achievement and to set challenging goals for their improvement. The use of data in mathematics is now developing along the same lines. Teachers are clear about the academic strengths and areas for development for each student in their class. Data is used productively in aligning the curriculum to students needs and in leading improvement work in the school. There is a particular strength in the way special education students are educated.

The principal is highly respected by students, parents and staff. Teamwork is the key to the school's success in promoting pupil achievement. This teamwork extends to the relationship with PS 224 and the most is made of the expertise and specialist help that this school can contribute. The quality of the work of the school is systematically checked, but at present too much of this work is done by the principal. Work has begun, however, to train other staff to assist her. Parents are very happy with the education their children receive. They say the school can be summed up by the word 'family'. Students love their school and all it provides.

### 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 has a great deal of data which is used well to give a clear picture of student achievement and to compare the performance of the school with similar schools. In English language arts data is used to provide a detailed picture of student achievement. Data is gained from formal testing through the State program, from school tests, and from day to day class work. The data provides an objective picture of the strengths and relative weaknesses in student performance. This enables the school to celebrate successes and make good shortcomings for individuals and for groups of students. Similar systems in mathematics are being developed and give a good, objective picture of overall achievement. However, these are not yet as sophisticated and do not provide the same level of detail.

The data concerning special needs education students is comprehensive, providing a detailed view of their needs and the progress they make. The progress of English language learners is tracked well and the school is rightly proud of the progress this shows. The performance of other gender and ethnic groups is also closely monitored. The school is working to extend this good practice to the monitoring of the progress made by its most able students.

The principal regularly shares with other staff her good knowledge of the performance and progress of different groups of students gained from the data collected. This ensures their good knowledge of this. Careful comparisons are made with similar schools so that staff are aware of the relative success of the education provided. The use of data to challenge and direct work in the school has supported a marked improvement in student achievement over the last 4 years. At present, however, the data systems in the school are overly complex and this is not helping a wider group of staff make direct use of the data for themselves.

**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.**

All staff work towards the improvement of student performance and progress. There is a collaborative approach to the setting of goals through regular grade and staff meetings. Data is used well to set long term improvement goals and to set targets for the improvement of aspects of subjects. The school is, for example, currently working hard to improve students’ writing stamina and number sense. School development work is planned to assist the meeting of these targets and movement towards them is regularly reviewed and revised.

Goals for special education students are well linked to their individual education plans and to the flexible class placements of these students in inclusion as well as self contained classes. Prompt action is taken when a student shows any signs of difficulty and the programs devised are flexible and well targeted. Staff are clear about expectations and time frames and good care is taken to ensure that students know their goals and are assisted to meet them. The school is not yet setting formal goals for the progress of its most able students, but has plans to do so in the current year.

Very high expectations are evident. Students know what is expected of them in the longer term and staff work hard to assist them to meet the challenge. Students are not, however, always as sure of what their goal is for the current lesson or how they will know if they have met this challenge. Parents have a good knowledge of the strengths and areas for improvement in their child’s work and monthly parent workshops and meetings, along with the productive work of the school’s parent coordinator, provide them with good opportunities to find out how to best help their child. This assists the progress they 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.**

Considerable thought, imaginatively linked to the analysis of data, is given to the development of the curriculum. The school has, for example, just adopted a new mathematics scheme in order to assist student learning in this area. Links with the college have assisted the successful introduction of intervention programs, such as the Wilson phonic program. The school is increasingly looking at how effective learning in one subject

can inform best practice in another. A weakness in measurement was, for example, identified and rectified through teaching techniques that were developed in science.

The principal knows each student as an individual and regularly, but sensitively, challenges staff to account for the progress being made by students in their classes. Staff plan work to try to best assist students to make progress. They provide them with clear instruction and help them to know what to expect of themselves over time. Work is well differentiated in English language arts. In mathematics, work is well differentiated for students with lower achievements and is well aligned to the needs of most others in the class. There is increasingly good use of extension materials provided by the new mathematics scheme to challenge the more able students. The school is not complacent, however, and is continuing to look at the way these students could be further challenged and more actively engaged in their lessons. Students report that they enjoy school and the vast majority concentrate well in lessons.

The deployment of staff is very effective and, for example, differentiation for special needs students is assisted by the creative use of staff working in collaboration so that students benefit from their different skills. The school's budget is carefully managed so that funding is available to support development in the school's identified areas for improvement.

Relationships within the school are a major strength, with students and parents commenting that everyone knows and cares for everyone else. Attendance is above the state average, but the school continues to work hard to improve this. The principal knows the absence record of each student and uses this knowledge to good effect when talking with parents.

**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.**

Staff selection is carefully managed. The recent increase in staffing, due to the creation of some inclusion classes, was used to establish collaborative partnerships and to make the best use of the skills of both new and existing staff. Staff are selected for their ability to fit into the way the school runs. Parents commented on this, saying that all fit into the school 'family' feel. The established work culture of the school ensures new staff quickly become accountable for student outcomes. Confidence in the principal is very high. Staff, students and parents all show her great respect and strive to live up to her high expectations. The school runs very smoothly and all feel well informed and valued.

Professional development is very well managed. The principal visits all classes on a daily basis as well as undertaking scheduled formal lesson observations. She organises the review of student work, for example the regular review of pupils' writing. Because of this hands on approach, the principal is quick to spot professional development needs. Until recently she has been responsible for much of the monitoring of work and the resultant planning of professional development, but she is now training a wider group of staff to support her in undertaking this role.

Aspects for whole school development spring from the careful analysis of data and staff are given good opportunities through work in school and with other agencies, to improve their skills. The success of past development work is evident in raised achievement. The current work to establish the new mathematics scheme is well planned and sensibly

paced. Planning for this is collaborative and staff regularly meet to discuss the impact of what they are doing. They observe each other and are open to the comment of others to assist them develop their skills and practice. The principal is keen to further extend the impact of this work through the development of the depth of understanding of school data by a wider group of staff.

The school makes the very best use of a range of outside partners. Particular benefit is gained by the partnership with the school for special needs students that shares the same site. Relationships with other youth support services, for example those provided by the YMCA, are good and are used well to promote student achievement.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

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

Led by the principal, the school is, despite its successes, a self-evaluative institution that constantly questions whether it is doing the best for its students. It then seeks new ways to improve. Decision making is collaborative and, for example, the selection of the new mathematics scheme was only taken after information gathering and training for staff. All who work in the school, both teaching and support staff, feel fully included and are thus encouraged and enabled to play a full part in the promotion of student learning. Staff are willing to take on new initiatives, for example, showing a pride in the way the new inclusion classes have worked and have enhanced the overall education provided.

The school uses its Comprehensive Education Plan to focus its development activities. A plan for improvement is drawn up from this and long term, measurable targets are set for improvement. School development work is carefully planned and interim goals are clear. They could, however, be more explicitly identified in the written document to enable it to be monitored more effectively. The school is clearly responsive to the occasional need to change or add improvement priorities. The addition of improvement work in students' skills in measurement, for example, was generated by a routine evaluation of pupil performance.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Castlewood Public School [PS 186]</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X