



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Ocean School**

**Public School 197**

**825 Hicksville Road  
Queens  
NY 11691**

**Principal: Michael Koss**

**Dates of review: May 23 - 25, 2007**

**Reviewer: Corinne Brown**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Ocean School, Public School 197, is located in the Far Rockaway community of Queens. This elementary school serves a population of 523 students in pre-kindergarten through 6th grade. The majority of students, at 58%, are Black, and 40% of students are Hispanic, with White and other ethnic groups forming 2%. Approximately 16% of students are English language learners and 15% are special education students.

The school receives Title 1 funding with a higher percentage of eligible students than in similar and City schools. Attendance averages 94%, which is slightly higher than in similar and City schools.

The building does not have its own schoolyard, but there is a public playground adjacent, which is also used by another school. The school has an auditorium, gymnasium, lunchroom, science, music and computer laboratories and art room, as well as many other specialist rooms, including a United Federation of Teacher Teachers' Center. There are seven special education classes with one collaborative team teaching classroom and dual language classes in kindergarten through grade 2.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is effective and shows determination, strong leadership, focus and vision to move the school forward and raising achievement.
- The assistant principals and coaches support the principal's mission to improve students' outcomes through implementation of data driven instruction.
- The staff are dedicated and demonstrate care and concern for their students.
- The school gathers a range of data, which its uses to construct teaching students and plan professional development.
- Attendance is very good with secure strategies to maintain it.
- The school knows itself well, builds on strengths and implements initiatives to address areas for development.
- The students identified as in greatest need of help are carefully prioritized.
- The school works to address students' social and emotional development linked to positive behavior strategies.
- The school offers comprehensive professional development to its staff.
- The school actively seeks to involve parents in the learning partnership.

### What the school needs to improve

- Sharpen the whole school and other plans to include specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-related goals.
- Refine the collection and analysis of data across content areas to construct a coherent picture of progress over time for individuals, groups and subgroups.
- Ensure consistent practice in classroom management, through common rules and routines.
- Use data to ensure that planning meets the needs of all students, including higher achievers, through differentiated activities, better pace and more challenge, to engage all students in their learning.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The Ocean School, works hard to enrich the lives of its students and develop them into responsible future citizens who like to learn. As most students do not live in the immediate vicinity, the school reaches out to the wider school community. The well-maintained, bright and colorful learning environment provides a warm welcome to all. Social factors inhibit many parents from active participation in their child's learning, but the school continually seeks ways to gain trust and elicit support.

The principal is determinedly optimistic and continues, along with the staff, to move the school forward through strategic planning to improve outcomes for students and to enrich their lives and widen their horizons. He is an effective leader with clear vision and a finger on the pulse of every aspect of the school and its community. His style is firm but fair and he is sensitive to the needs of his staff as well as those of the students. The school uses data to inform planning, instruction and professional development. This is a reflective school that has come far. It knows it still has more to do in its commitment to excellence for all students.

### 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 principal and administration lead the school in the analysis of data and they use the resulting information to plan professional development and improve teaching. The school carefully gathers a wide range of summative and formative performance data to understand the impact of its instructional programs on students' learning. For example, for grades 3 through 6, New York State assessments in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies, are analyzed alongside class-based assessments to measure individual, class and grade progress. Princeton Review information for mathematics and English language arts is used to help determine student groups and check skills acquisition. In the lower grades, the Reading First program provides regular data through interim assessments. Other tools used to measure students' progress include Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills and Early Childhood Language Arts System.

The school systematically and regularly examines data at cabinet meetings, grade conferences and study groups. The coaches effectively support the administration and teachers in gathering and sharing information. For example, the analysis of data for behavioral incidents enabled the school to respond strategically and provide training for the school aides who supervise the lunchroom. This has led to improvements in preventative action and a decrease in reported incidents.

The teachers maintain up to date portfolios of students' work and assessment data. Analysis sheets for data on reading and writing are completed by all teachers. The progress of special education and English language learners is rigorously monitored. This leads to changes in teaching groups and approaches to learning. Analysis of data by gender and ethnicity is undertaken, but the school does not yet drill deeper into this information.

The school has links with other schools with similar student populations and shares information and strategies. It has put in place plans to refine its collection of data and deepen the analysis it makes. It has hired a consultant to develop a database and to collate the various components of information on students making analysis quicker and easier. This strategy focuses on creating a better understanding of the factors that impact on performance and helping to build a clearer picture of students' progress across content areas, broken down for individuals, groups and subgroups.

**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 refers constantly to its data when considering plans and initiatives. Information from a wide range of meetings feeds into the consultative process. The Comprehensive Education Plan is firmly rooted in detailed analysis of the data, and is drawn up in consultation with all staff. The principal's performance review is similarly based on identified school priorities and aligned with the Plan. The school sets appropriate and challenging goals for overall improvement, but recognizes the need to incorporate clearer timeframes and interim monitoring. The school leadership team has only recently become a functioning group, with parental input. The school is looking to greater involvement of the whole leadership team in future.

Through careful consideration of consolidated and group-specific information, those students who are in greatest need become the focus for the whole school. These students include English language learners, special education students and those at risk of promotion failure. Benchmark assessments and other standardized data, in conjunction with information are used to plan appropriate and timely academic interventions for individuals but also to identify grade and class needs. As a result, the school has created specific reading or skill groupings and has introduced streaming for reading to meet identified needs.

Staff work together well together. They meet formally in daily common preparation sessions by grade level on content area development. They also meet informally to discuss students' holistic developments, and to devise and evaluate plans to meet their needs. There is a strong emphasis on the individual student and considerable expertise in implementing remediation programs.

The school actively seeks to involve parents and students in a learning partnership to share high expectations. One effective example is the participation at the pupil personnel team meetings of the student's parent. This enables all parties to share concerns and plan next steps. Monthly award celebrations are held in tandem with parent association meetings to harness greater attendance. The school does not, yet, enjoy the amount of parental support it wishes.

**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 aligns with mandated requirements. The school customizes it to suit its student population by incorporating elements of the Teachers' College writing program within its literacy approach for the primary grades. It implements Reading First in the lower

grades and uses Everyday Math and Impact Math as the basis for mathematics instruction. These measures give the school effective inbuilt assessment data to tailor programs further. The teachers are empowered to make collective decisions about the selection of social studies and science teaching materials, based on their knowledge of their students. Programs in art and music, for example, give the students wider opportunities to express themselves and experience success.

Data is used successfully to construct small groups of students for instruction in skills and strategies. The coaches give effective support to teachers in their use of data to plan appropriate instruction. They provide helpful materials such as rubrics for writing to help the students self-assess and provide a basis for conferencing and mini-lessons.

The teachers are generally enthusiastic and committed to making a difference for their students. However, they do not fully engage and challenge all students because activities are insufficiently differentiated or do not have the pace needed to meet the students' differing needs. The school knows it needs to ensure greater consistency of practice in effective classroom management through common rules and routines, to maximize learning opportunities.

The school uses its budget carefully to meet students' need. For example, the school arranges staffing and scheduling to keep class sizes small. This enables teachers to give more attention to individual students.

The main aims of the school are to meet the students' needs, to develop personal responsibility and to increase collaboration among students. The positive behavioral interventions and support system with inbuilt tangible rewards for students is having a positive impact on the tone of the school. The students feel that adults in the school care about them and they have someone to turn to if they need to talk about a problem. The staff are dedicated and demonstrate care and concern for students, with many arranging visits and undertaking professional development to improve instructional practice for the benefit of their students. Student attendance is generally very good and is given high priority by the school. There are assigned staff and various strategies including outreach to maintain this.

**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 school selects its staff with due consideration of the academic and personal needs of its students, so teachers have a love of teaching, are learners themselves and committed to use data. Staff strengths are harnessed to add to the collective bank of expertise. The school also builds capacity in staff through extensive professional development. The assistant principals, although new to the school, share the principal's vision to accelerate improvement and so work with the coaches to enhance the quality of instruction well. The school is developing staff expertise as both managers and leaders, through the planned change of emphasis in responsibilities.

Professional development is a high priority. Comprehensive formal and informal professional development aligns closely with school priorities and students' needs. The school occasionally engages outside experts to provide good motivational training to kick start new initiatives. More commonly, the staff share their knowledge and experience during common preparation periods or study groups. These focus strongly on data and provide effective opportunities for collaboration. In this, all opinions and levels of experience are valued and information and strategies freely shared. Grade level meetings generally work well with staff planning, evaluating and learning together. The introduction

of the 'Core Knowledge' initiative encourages wider staff collaboration. This is being developed further.

The principal is effective and shows determination to move the school forward and raising achievement through clear, strong leadership. The parents appreciate his support and believe the school is calmer since his arrival. As one said, "He tries to work with you".

The principal knows and respects his staff through frequent lesson observations and meetings. He works sensitively with them to build capacity and consult on new initiatives. The school works diligently to address student social and emotional development linking actions to positive behavior strategies. As a result, the school generally runs smoothly with students' movements actively managed and discipline referral routes made clear.

The school has several considered partnerships with community-based organizations. These broaden students' exposure to the world beyond school and complement academic programs well. The Henry Street Settlement builds academics through the arts, while the after-school Virtual Y program responds to school issues and offers both recreational and academic activities. Among many other productive partnerships, the school has a mental health clinic in the building, which extends the support offered by its caring staff.

**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.**

This school knows itself well and engages in a continual process of self-evaluation to improve further the outcomes for students. The Comprehensive Education Plan is the blueprint to move the school forward, underpinned by detailed analysis of performance data. All meetings, when making decisions, refer to relevant data from students' work, State assessments, other test results, academic intervention plans or evidence from observations and visits. In this way, the school has good knowledge of its continuing performance. It uses this understanding in conjunction with information from previous years and by comparison to similar schools, to formulate new plans, or revise current ones. Although this process is ongoing, it is not always formalized and the school is aware that it needs to sharpen some of its goals to make them more precise and quantifiable.

The school community benefits from the dedication of all school staff who show respect and consideration for the development of the students into responsible citizens. Teachers strive to embrace the pedagogical developments and initiatives that contribute best to improved student outcomes. They incorporate these into their data-based collaborative planning.

The principal leads the drive to accelerate school performance through harnessing technology and implementation of best professional practice. He and the staff work hard within a warm and welcoming school environment to bring all parents into the learning partnership and reach out to build trust and share information.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Ocean School (PS 197)</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	