



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Public School / Intermediate School 208

**74 - 30 Commonwealth Boulevard
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NY 11426**

Principal: James Philemy

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Reviewer: Chris Andrews

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public / Intermediate School 208 is a relatively new school which opened in September 2003 and which provides education for 712 students from kindergarten to 8. It is a lottery school and 90% of the students are bussed in. Incorporated within the same building is a District 75 program, and many of these students are educated inclusively within the school.

The school population comprises 77.8% Black and 10.4% Asian students, with the remainder coming from other ethnic communities, including White, Hispanic and Native American. Very few are either special education students or English language learners and only 31% are Title 1 eligible. This is well below the City average. Attendance is presently 95.1% which is above the City average.

Public / Intermediate School 208 is committed to the philosophy of constant improvement and high expectations. It also has the goal of creating environment that is conducive to learning, where all students feel respected and trusted, and where students will in turn feel able to confide in one another.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- There is a culture of striving for excellence in the school which well reflects its core aims and the principal's strong leadership and expectations.
- The school makes very good use of data to analyze student progress, and to institute appropriate strategies.
- Teachers evaluate their instructional practice and adapt their planning to ensure that the lessons reflect the students' needs.
- There is a wide range of professional development for teachers, of which coaching is a particularly strong feature.
- Teachers are well qualified and deliver interesting lessons, using a variety of instructional techniques.
- There are many opportunities for students to work collaboratively and to be involved in their own assessments.
- The support program for students experiencing difficulties, whether academic or personal, is well managed through the academic intervention services program and the pupil personnel committee.
- Communication is excellent and all parents are kept well-informed of what is happening in school.
- Involvement of parents in the school through the parent-teachers' association and in their children's learning is a strong feature.
- Behavior is very good which gives all students the best opportunity to learn and to meet their goals.

What the school needs to improve

- The school does not yet focus enough on the changes made to the grade 4 and Grade 8 tests which resulted in a lower percentage of students reaching levels 3 and 4 in summer 2006.
- There is some inconsistency in the degree to which data is used by different teachers.
- Opportunities for teachers and students to use information technology vary as access to the computer laboratory or to available smartboards is limited.
- The school does not yet provide enough time for teacher to engage in peer observations and to allow teachers to see good practice and so enhance their own instructional skills

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

Public School 208 provides a good quality of education for all its students. The principal has in a relatively short time created a culture of high expectations, high commitment, and clear goals which underpin his broad philosophy for the school. He and his assistant principals provide high quality leadership and are excellent role models to teachers and students alike.

The school provides a supportive environment of which all members of the school community are clearly very proud. Students enjoy coming to school, and respond positively to their teachers who work hard to provide a rich variety of educational experiences. There is a strong commitment to the achievement of excellence, and this is shared by the parents, many of whom take an active role in school life and in their children's education. The inclusion of many students from the District 75 program into the main school classrooms reflects the school's culture and also helps develop the social awareness of the other students.

Resources are generally very good and the appearance of classrooms and corridors adds to the sense of academic excellence. Student work and success is celebrated and is seen as something to which all students can and should aspire.

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 well developed.

The school collects and makes use of a wide range of information which it uses to track student progress and performance. Data includes standardized results, developmental tests at mid-term, and the end of the year and the teachers' own notes taken from continuous assessment within the classroom. The data is broken down in various ways so that the performance of different sub-groups within the school, for instance gender and ethnic groups can be analyzed.

The itemized analysis provided by the English language arts plus is used to inform both instructional programs and teacher professional development. Cluster teachers who deliver instruction in social sciences use their record books effectively and have regular meetings with each other and with the principal to evaluate progress and to plan accordingly. Students have their goals, which they know, and can be targeted at an early stage with appropriate intervention programs if a fall-off in performance is identified.

The assistant principals have monitoring roles in respect of student progress and hold regular meetings with their grade teams to discuss both general trends and individual student performances. They help teachers interpret the data and highlight either individual students or instructional areas which require attention. However, not all teachers are

equally confident with the analysis and use of data. Assistant principals share their findings with the principal at weekly meetings, and feedback is given to teachers orally or in writing. The principal has kept detailed records of student achievement over the three years of the school's existence and uses this as benchmarking material. He also scrutinizes the performance of similar schools and willingly admits to taking ideas from other institutions if they will benefit this school.

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 well developed.

The principal has very high expectations of all members of the school community. Whole-school goals are set by the cabinet using the data from the various tests, and these are shared with the teachers through the grade team meetings. Teachers share individual goals with students through regular conferences, and with parents through the annual curriculum night, the school website and individual communications.

Goals are recorded in student portfolios, and parents can check on their children's progress through the website, using individual student identification numbers. This allows parents to share directly in the education of their children, and is much appreciated. Regular workshops are held to explain instructional strategies to parents and these are well attended. Formal meetings are also well attended, and the attendance at these, and at workshops, is monitored to evaluate their effectiveness. Teachers are always ready to give their time to parents to discuss issues when necessary, and parents find this both welcome and reassuring. Students in need of particular support are identified from test scores or from referrals and are given individual education plans.

Many students are incorporated into the after-school additional instructional support program, but those with social or developmental needs receive appropriate support from the relevant paraprofessionals as identified through the pupil personnel committee. The Comprehensive Education Plan provides a structure for developing the school over the coming year. However, within this document it is the plans which relate to grades, classes or individuals which provide the main drivers for sustained progress.

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 chosen curriculum (America's Choice) is standards-based and therefore its links to the data are very clear. Some identified gaps in this curriculum have been covered by developing good practice within the school. In the area of balanced literacy, for example, teachers use professional development time to share instructional ideas. Teachers have developed their own assessment processes to be able to monitor student progress over periods of a month to six weeks. The budget is effectively managed, with funding clearly directed towards the priorities identified through the analysis of data. Investment in training, support and resources for the guided reading program is a good example of this process.

Teachers are held accountable by the principal and his assistants through the regular grade meetings, through the itemized analysis of data and through formal and informal observations. Teachers accept this and use the data in most cases to evaluate their teaching and to make appropriate modifications to their programs. They also differentiate their instruction appropriately, with the same topic covered by different approaches. They are able, because behavior is good, to focus their full attention where it is most needed, and so they also differentiate by teacher input. Lessons are challenging, with a variety of activities in each period, and students are encouraged to use rubrics to peer and self-review their work. This makes them more effective and independent learners, and helps engage them in their studies. There is not enough access by students and teachers to computer technology across the curriculum to allow students to build their skills.

Attendance is good, and the procedures for reporting and managing absence are clear and understood. The impact of the quality of the teaching can in part be seen in the growing number of students who have moved on to specialist high schools. There is a culture of mutual respect, and students know that staff will support them if necessary.

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 teachers that are appointed are well qualified and share the principal's commitment to the school vision and its goals. The majority are comfortable with the use of data, but there are some teachers whose capacity is less well developed. All teachers are provided with a detailed breakdown of the students' performances but not all make good use of this information.

Professional development is designed to respond to the school's needs and those of teachers, as identified by the evaluation of the school plans and data, but opportunities for some aspects of this are not consistent. The principal and assistant principals observe teachers both formally and informally (through regular walk-throughs) but peer observation depends in part upon the ability to manage the necessary periods of time, and not all teachers feel that they have adequate opportunities here. Common preparation times do allow for some peer observation, and experienced teachers are filmed so that their expertise can be shared, but this is an area for further development.

Planning and evaluation is a collegial activity, and grade teams, the cluster teams, and the senior leadership team all meet regularly to monitor and review progress. The principal is highly respected throughout the school community and he is a key factor in the school's development. The school is a calm and well-ordered community, with excellent communications between school and home. There is a wide range of collaborative activities with local and City institutions such as the local high school and the Metropolitan Transport Authority, which add significantly to the wider curriculum to enrich the students' experience, and promoting their academic and personal development.

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.

The Comprehensive Education Plan provides the main framework for school improvement and has goals which are reviewed annually in a process shared by various groups within the school community. The goals are evaluated against the data and this evaluation results in modifications for the next version of the plan. During the year, grade teams under the leadership of the assistant principals meet monthly to evaluate student progress and to consider both individual performance and general trends.

Individual teachers review the progress of their own classes, but it has been noted that this is not always consistent in terms of data use. However, all teachers clearly have a good understanding of the needs of their particular class of students. The pupil personnel committee also meets monthly and reacts flexibly to developing problems and this is shared with administrators and classroom teachers. Consequently, it can be said that the processes in place ensure that there is a good understanding of progress towards school and individual goals. Currently the dip in results in 2006 is the central feature for consideration by the school, and the analysis has already shown areas for teacher and student development. The guided reading program also emerged from an earlier analysis, and resources and professional development followed this analysis.

Public / Intermediate School 208 is a successful and dynamic school which has in place the key processes and systems to renew its upward trend. Improved student performance is central to all that the school does, and the administrators, led by a forceful and effective principal, are well-equipped to maintain the school's well-deserved reputation.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School /Intermediate School 208	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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