



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Public School 224 Queens

**72 Street
Queens
NY 11426**

Principal: Rose Tomaselli

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Reviewer: Alvin Jeffs

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 224 Queens is a multi-sited school serving 400 students in 44 classes, grades pre-kindergarten through 8. There are five sites located within community school buildings and one that is self-contained. Students come from various parts of the borough of Queens. They are designated as experiencing severe developmental delays, emotional deficits, hearing impairments and many are within the autistic spectrum.

Nearly one quarter of students are White, 39% are Black, 22% Hispanic and 13% Asian. All have individual education plans. Over half are alternate assessment students with 48% taking standardized assessments. Thirty-four of the 397 students are English language learners at 'intermediate' or 'proficient' standards.

The school has a very experienced staff. Nearly three-quarters have five or more years training and well over 90% have masters degrees or higher. All but 3% of staff are listed as 'highly qualified' or 'qualified' and 71% of them have more than five years experience in teaching.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Parents say they count themselves privileged to have found a school that is as committed and caring “as an extended family”.
- Students respect the staff, their commitment and the results they achieve.
- The principal is universally respected and provides very clear and very effective leadership.
- The consistency of service across the six sites is very good and a tribute to the professionalism and close teamwork by all senior staff.
- Class teachers and paraprofessionals know their students well and set appropriate targets for academic achievement and behavior.
- The school uses a wealth of appropriate data to gain the clearest possible picture of student strengths and weaknesses.
- The rigorous behaviour support program has achieved dramatic results with many students.
- Professional development is of a high quality and supports many valuable initiatives within the school.
- Careful attention is paid to attendance and this produces good results.
- The collaboration with general education schools is very good and this contributes to the highly successful inclusion program.

What the school needs to improve

- Seek appropriate comparisons with other schools to more effectively evaluate all aspects of performance.
- Investigate the possibility of creating even more mainstream opportunities.
- Assess the possibility of ending the behavior support program for those students who meet the highest standards of conduct.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

PS 224 has six sites makes and is a complex organization. Pairs of sites are allocated to each of three assistant principals, with unit leaders providing the day-to-day management on each site. This is a strong management model, which is assisted by excellent communication links between the six sites. In addition to the large number of sites, the school population is very diverse. It caters for a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities. The most recent expansion is in the area of pre-kindergarten students with an actual or tentative diagnosis of autism. As with all developments at the school, the initiative has been very well supported by a considerable amount of high quality professional development.

The school mission statements states “We are dedicated to achieving high standards for all our student.” This is borne out by the results it achieves. In 2006 71% of the ‘autistic’ pre-schoolers were recommended for less restrictive environments. Students involved in the many inclusion programs have increased from six to 30 and this aspect of the school’s work is very strong. One reason for this success is the excellent relationships that exist between staff and principals where PS 224 schools are integrated with general education schools. The success of this school arises from a strong combination of detailed data collection, which means that students are well known to staff, and the outstanding level of care. All staff have a commitment which is outstanding. This commitment is converted into very good individual targets and plans for students, together with strong personal involvement that assists them in developing self-esteem and confidence.

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 employs a wide range of data, all of which is relevant to the many aspects of learning difficulties experienced by students. It draws upon external assessments, mainly the Brigance Inventory, early childhood literary assessment systems, Qualitative Reading Inventories IV and Everyday Mathematics. These give a good baseline for individual students and give teachers a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of each one. These are rapidly and regularly supplemented by informal assessments, tests and observational data from the classroom. As this process is uniform within each site and across the six sites, it means that senior staff have an exceptionally detailed picture of student and grade levels and can interrogate data to identify progress for the range of needs displayed by students.

A particularly powerful tool is the student binder for students with aspects of autism. This comprises the formal and informal test data, but has the added benefit of a cumulative collection of student work. The binder is not only a thoroughgoing collection of assessment data, it is a working document that is readily available for grade conferences,

individual planning purposes and to share with parents on occasions such as parent conference evenings. The quantity and excellent detail of the data means that the school is able to track the progress of particular groups of students such as English language learners, those with additional difficulties, such as hearing impairment, and other groups of interest such as students who have strong parental support. The school rightly feels that the detail of its data allows every student to be dealt with appropriately and in depth.

At present the school finds it difficult to find similar schools for comparison purposes. While, developments achieved through, for example, the emphasis on developing student writing or the highly structured language program for students with hearing impairment are good, there is no clear external data against which to assess these developments.

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.

All staff use data, including their deep knowledge of students, to achieve the highest possible performance for each student. When discussing students they base their summaries and recommendations on the student binders and portfolios. When developing lesson groupings within, particularly, English and mathematics, current information is always available for that planning.

Collaboration is a major strength of the school. Detailed data is available for a range of discussions across the six sites. From the classroom teachers’ point of view, it means that they are able to discuss students in their own right, on a case conference basis, and also as part of a grade level where group and curriculum planning is concerned. Teachers report that they are able to bring data regularly to meetings which focus on the needs of specific groups of students. This has been particularly helpful recently with regard to pre-kindergarten students. The quality and detail within student and teacher binders and folders is of the highest quality. It has allowed success to be monitored not only with regard to individual students, but also in connection with the development of new and complex forms of support.

There are many occasions when decisions have to be made concerning individuals. This may relate to deciding on a less restrictive environment for a young child with previous communication difficulties. It may link to decisions concerning whether a student is ready for total or partial inclusion within a mainstream classroom. It may simply be that a case has to be made to the Committee for Special Education. In each instance up-to-date information is available with regard to academic performance, behavior patterns and attendance. This information is shared with students and parents through the regular conferences. Parents agree that the large amount of data is helpful when they wish to discuss their child. It highlights areas of progress, personal and academic. It also pinpoints aspects of work or behavior that they, as parents, can assist in developing.

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 engagement of pupils is very good. Most students display surprising confidence in talking to an audience, meeting strangers and voicing ideas and opinions. Parents and students testify that the school is as good as “an extended family”, characterized by a high level of care together with a real involvement in the drive for individual success.

The curriculum offered is appropriate for each age level and relates well to the major disabilities experienced by the students. Thus, students with aspects of autism are taught using the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication for the Handicapped Child techniques and also with the Picture Exchange Communication System. Those students experiencing emotional and behavioral difficulties are particularly helped by the ‘Power of Choice’ and ‘Stars’ programs which provide incentives through a rigorous points system with specific targets. Similarly, all students benefit from the enhanced focus on writing arising from the excellent collaboration with the Teacher’s College Collaborative. A particularly impressive aspect of the curriculum is the range of opportunities available for students to be included with general education peers and, increasingly, the chance to be placed in mainstream education full time. All of these initiatives are well managed, with excellent teaching and staff collaboration. It is possible because of the outstanding partnership that exists between the principals involved. All exhibit a commitment to inclusive education that is both philosophically and practically well thought through. Students say they would like even more opportunities to experience mainstream opportunities.

Lesson plans are differentiated for individuals and relate well to language, literacy and social levels. Good use of technology ‘carts’ means that computers are readily available to assist in this. Lessons are also planned with achievement groups in mind. This is of particular benefit for higher achieving students and those who need intensive one-on-one support. Schedules have been aligned so that staff can meet to discuss work and planning. The budget is closely linked to the main school goals, while taking into account needs that arise during the year, such as additional training. New staff are appointed on the basis of being committed to student targets and high achievement. Students report that there is always an adult to consult with and this adds to the security they feel.

All staff are conscious of the importance of good attendance. At 90% this is high, but the school is keen to ensure that prompt action and the excellent support provided to parents by the parent coordinator and the family support worker contribute to even higher rates.

The attention to attendance is excellent. High attendance rates, over 90%, are achieved by prompt action, good links with parents and additional support from the Family Worker.

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 highly respected within the school and also by parents. She leads a senior team that is characterized by its experience and professionalism. The management structure ensures that all sites receive the same information and work to the same goals, a

fact that is appreciated by staff and parents alike. There is regular observation of lessons on all sites by all senior staff and feedback to staff is both prompt and informative. Staff recognize this as a valuable aspect of their own development. Professional development is of a high order. This is essential in a school that works with so many different groups of special education students. Thus teachers working with students with autism have benefited significantly from the training in Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication for the Handicapped Child and Picture Exchange Communication System. Support professionals, such as the speech and language therapist and educational psychologist receive their own regular professional development and this contributes well to the knowledge base within the school. Academic intervention staff have received high quality training in 'Ramp Up', the 'Wilson' program and 'Foundations', while the school itself provides excellent training from the coaches and good dissemination of technology skills from the cross-site specialist group. The latter is a good example of the many teams and grouping that operate within the school. Thus, practitioners working with complex needs, autism and emotional difficulties have regular opportunities to plan together, exchange information and turnkey training that they have received on an individual basis. All teams work across the six sites and this creates an excellent degree of uniformity in the standard of planning and teaching for all groups of students. Day-to-day routines work smoothly and consistently as a result.

The high standards reached by staff is assisted by the careful recruitment of teachers who have either the experience or willingness to work with the different groups of students. In addition, care is taken that all newly hired staff receive appropriate mentoring and support, particularly in the area of data collection and planning on the basis of that data collected. The school uses a large number of partnerships to enhance the education of students. The parent coordinator does a particularly good job in using Resources for Children with Special Needs to staff parent workshops.

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.

Every aspect of the school's work is based upon evidence collected from staff and from student performance. This means that each initiative within a well constructed Comprehensive Education Plan moves the school, and students, on because it is always building upon existing good practice and areas identified for development. The extremely effective behavior plan is a good example. The introduction of well validated programs, varying according to age, has been successful because the processes have been regularly reviewed and cross-referenced with the changes in student performance. The points and reward systems have contributed to the considerable improvement in student behavior at both individual and whole-school levels. Staff monitor student progress through classroom observations and student conferencing. Students testify to very significant improvement in behavior as a result of the initiatives. Some students question whether high levels of success could not lead to a waiving of the program to allow greater independence, as they are not automatically students who receive the immediate reward of mainstreaming.

The overall Comprehensive Education Plan is a living document that is reviewed at set points during the year. The plan effectively deals with site-specific issues. It is reviewed against the rich body of data within the school and both senior staff and the school leadership team have the opportunity to amend targets and use the current

Comprehensive Education Plan as the basis for the next round of targets. With its emphasis on data-based review, a focus on enhancing a student achievement and the implementation across all sites and groups of students, the school's development plan typifies all of the procedures within the school. The school's self-evaluation underestimates the progress it has made since this is a school with very good systems.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 224Q	∅	✓	+
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	