



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Walter Ward School

Public School 232

**153-23 83rd Street
Queens
NY 11414**

Principal: Lisa Josephson

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Reviewer: Louise Kapner

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Walter Ward School, PS 232, is located in the Howard Beach section of Queens, New York, and serves 695 students from kindergarten through grade 6. The majority of students, 41%, are White. Of the remainder, 36% are Hispanic, 16% are Asian, and 7% are Black. Around 16% of the students receive special education in self-contained classes or special education teacher support services. 6% of the students are English language learners.

Attendance, at 93%, is average when compared to similar schools and to City schools. 45% of the students are eligible for Title 1 which is significantly below the level found in similar schools or that of schools in the City . The school is not Title 1 eligible.

PS 232 is transitioning into a kindergarten through 8th grade school. In September, 2006, 6th grade was added. By adding a further grade each year, the school will have its full complement of students in September 2008.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and her assistant principal are effective instructional leaders.
- Members of the extended cabinet are highly skilled and support the instructional program well.
- The administration adeptly identifies students' needs and is implementing appropriate instructional programs.
- Parents feel welcomed and appreciate the safe environment and commitment of school staff.
- Professional development is integral and well used to support teachers to meet the goals of the school.
- Staff work in a collaborative manner and contribute effectively to the positive climate of the school.
- Teachers create learning environments that engage students and address students' needs.
- Students understand the school's expectations and through their active engagement in the school significantly contribute to its successes.

What the school needs to improve

- Further disaggregate data to monitor performance and progress of student sub-groups and to identify those students who may not have made appropriate gains or may have lost ground.
- Develop ways in which information and expectations can be consistently shared with all parents.
- Build on the good work in data collection and design a process that will allow teachers to consistently track and develop individual student performance and progress.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The Walter Ward School is well-organized highly effective school with clear expectations for teaching and learning to raise student achievement. The principal, who is finishing her second year, brings a strong instructional background to the leadership role. She is well supported by a skilled assistant principal, extended cabinet and staff who know students very well, value them as individuals and are committed to raising student achievement.

The collection and use of data is well managed and used effectively to differentiate instruction and monitor student performance and progress. High quality professional development is an integral part of the school program. Teachers are provided with extensive opportunities and they actively participate in many activities that support them as learners and educators. There is rigorous monitoring and evaluation of student performance and progress, as a result plans are modified to address students' identified needs.

The school was recently recognized by 'School Matters,' a service of Standard and Poor's, as one of ten schools in New York City to bridge the achievement gap in 4th grade. The progress of the school is evidenced by the recently received results on the 2007 English language arts tests which show gains by students on all grades in meeting the standards.

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 collects, disaggregates and uses a wide-range of data relating to the performance and progress of individuals and groups of students including by class and grade. Scores from standardized tests are disaggregated at all levels and then used to accurately group students. Results from the interim assessments, Princeton and 'Options', provide diagnostic information and skills analysis in mathematics and reading which effectively support differentiated instruction. Original student work and each student's Fountas and Pinnell reading level provide further data to inform instruction. The principal receives an aggregate summary of each class' results that highlights the number of students performing on each reading level and how they stand relative to the grade's range of reading levels. Highly disaggregated data from the New York State English as a second language achievement test for English language learners, and individual education plans for special education students, are all used well. The outcomes allow teachers to get a good understanding of the performance and progress of students and then inform instruction. Data for students identified as most in need, and those in the gifted program, is further analyzed to ensure appropriate instruction leading to value added. Currently, the school does not disaggregate data of all student subgroups, but recognizes that further

interrogation of data by ethnicity or gender could also help to support the school's efforts in raising academic achievement for all students.

Individual students' reading levels are benchmarked and recorded five times a year. The principal carefully compares student, class, and grade and subject area progress for the current school year and from year-to-year. In this way, she helps to ensure that teaching and learning is effective for all students. She also compares her school's results to those of neighboring schools. Student data is now being disaggregated and compared to prior year's results to analyze the progress that has been made so far. Most importantly, this analysis is used constructively by the administration and the extended cabinet to plan the next steps in the schools work.

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.

Teachers work collaboratively to build a picture of what their students know, understand and can do in order to plan the next steps in their learning. For example, a kindergarten grade conference was devoted to scoring of the writing section of the recently administered early childhood literacy assessment system. Using this information the teachers are now working collaboratively to identify strategies that will improve the next stages of instruction.

Information from the school's report card combined with a review of recent data are part of a well thought out process that allows the principal to identify areas of need and to set both short and long range plans for the whole school, and for individual students. For example, results for English language learners showed a need to strengthen instruction and support students on the cusp of transitioning out of the program. Consequently, the English as a second language teacher, in consultation with classroom teachers, now differentiates instruction to a much higher degree and incorporates guided reading methodology throughout his program. As a result, 13 out of 19 eligible English language learners passed the 2007 English language arts test. Following a review of all available data, the school set a goal to strengthen literacy instruction. The teachers then received extensive professional development in improving skills in conferencing, and as a teacher explained, "the strategy of conferencing is now effectively used to assess rather than just instruct."

The school prioritizes its focus on those students who need extra help. For example, by ensuring special education classroom teachers all ensure that they incorporate valuable phonics elements into their daily literacy program. Students who are retained in the early grades are provided with helpful small group and one-on-one tutoring. A student repeating the second grade who received both academic intervention and individual tutoring is succeeding and has progressed from a level K to level M in reading. Push-in and pull-out services are provided by intervention specialists during the regular school day and during the extended day program in both literacy and mathematics.

Teaching points are posted daily, flow of the day, skill of the week, and school-created grade-specific rubrics spread high expectations and focus students on learning. Students say that this "step-by-step instruction" is very helpful. A monthly newsletter and detailed calendar of events provide parents with a range of school information. However, while parents do receive reports cards, the process of sharing day-to-day student performance

with parents is not consistent across the grades. Presently the school does not have systems in place to ensure a regular flow of information to keep parents' apprised of their child's progress. Parents do appreciate and recognize the efforts of the school, and many of them have opted to keep their children in PS 232 as it transitions to a kindergarten through grade 8 school.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

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

The school curriculum accurately caters for the needs of all students. Assessment results are methodically interrogated to identify programs and interventions that meaningfully supplement the curriculum. Guided reading and mandated mathematics programs are well developed. Literacy and mathematic blocks allow ample time for instruction. There is a good emphasis on using content area books for read-a-louds and shared reading in order to build students' vocabulary. A comprehensive mathematics pacing calendar, aligned with State standards, reliably focuses teachers on skill development. Students are actively engaged in learning through the use of a variety of processes that capture and maintain their interest; these include mathematical games, an inquiry-based science program, and Leapfrog, a supplemental computer self-paced reading program.

The principal holds teachers accountable for student achievement. They use detailed guided reading logs and assessment data to inform and modify their instruction. During learning walks, administrators review the data and look for evidence to ensure that professional development is incorporated into instruction. However, teachers do not yet consistently track individual student results in relation to their skill development. The development of a student specific tracking process which highlights the progress students make as well as indicating what they need to do to improve would further support the differentiation of instruction.

A detailed analysis of data is central to the school's decision-making for budgeting, staffing and scheduling. Resources are directed toward supporting identified priorities for instruction and school organization. Careful attention is paid to using staff talents to strengthen programming and present staff members will assume out-of-classroom positions for next year to support the instructional program.

The nurturing climate of the school supports the whole child. "Children come first, you know the children here," stated a teacher. Students know that their "teachers understand them" and "if it's really serious I can go to the guidance counselor, assistant principal or principal to get a proper solution." Attending school on a regular basis is seen as a priority for the students and the parent coordinator actively follows-up on students not in school. 'Study buddy' reinforces the importance that students make up missed work.

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.

PS 232 has a very stable staff. As they move to a kindergarten through grade 8 school, the school leadership team are preparing to participate in the selection of new teachers. The school's focus on certified, skilled educators, who understand and can use data to improve student outcomes, is seen by them all as their number one priority.

Teacher's professional development arises from the review of data and the continuous drive to improve student achievement. Teacher suggestions and any specific needs they identify help to set the professional development agenda. Teachers in the gifted program attended Hunter College's institute on gifted education. After-school professional development is planned to support the implementation of technology into the classroom. Teachers use common meeting time, grade conferences, and 'Chat and Chews', to engage in opportunities to learn and share best practices. The mathematics coach is working with classroom teachers to create lab sites so teachers can visit other classes and learn how mathematics centers can "become a hub for activities, not a hub for materials." There is close collaboration among teachers. They effectively plan together to implement instructional initiatives. A senior staff member assigned as a mentor to a new teacher provided him with opportunities to observe and engage in conversations around good instruction. The pupil personnel and academic intervention team, and the extended cabinet, further support the school's dedication to improve student outcomes.

Formal observations are a shared responsibility of the principal and assistant principal. They also frequently conduct learning walks as a way to effectively monitor the implementation of professional development to improve instruction. The constructive feedback is welcomed by staff. Inter-visitations by staff further support the sharing of best practices.

The school is welcoming to the entire community and is very well run. The administrators are highly regarded and respected and the needs of the students are well met by the services of the school's counselors. A recently initiated student council is involving students in discussions focused on school activities. The local assemblywoman and councilman further support the school with grant money and have visited and attended ceremonies celebrating the school's and students' accomplishments. A recent cultural grant enabled the school to bring in professional musicians and instructors to work with the students.

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 principal and assistant principal are highly ambitious for the school. Staff are active participants in setting goals. Progress towards meeting interim goals for instruction and student achievement, are consistently monitored throughout the year and next steps are well thought out and carefully implemented. On-going analysis of the data by student, class, grade, enables interim reassessment and comparisons of progress and

performance. School resources and programs are realigned to meet the instructional and social needs of all of the students. For example the move to increase read-a-louds and allow for more independent reading is focused on supporting literacy instruction and student learning. New programs such as a school band and school chorus provide enrichment opportunities, and a basketball team and cheerleading squad engage the older students in recreational activities.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is a worthwhile working document and accurately reflects the school's program. Specialists from the staff are actively involved in writing and revising the plan as needed. As the school continues to grow, the leadership is using this year's outcomes as a basis for collaboratively planning and setting goals for next year. This year's test results will be used to further plan professional development and grouping of students. An upper grade literacy coach and upper grade science cluster teacher will be working closely with the middle school teachers to ensure good instruction. PS 232 is looking to ensure that it has a successful instructional program that is consistent and congruent from kindergarten through grade 8.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Walter Ward School (PS 232)	∅	✓	+
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