



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Cornelius Vanderbilt School**

**100 Tompkins Avenue  
Staten Island  
NY 10304**

**Principal: Nancy Hargett**

**Dates of review: December 13 - 14, 2006**

**Reviewer: Barry King**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Cornelius Vanderbilt School is an elementary school for pre-kindergarten through grade 5, serving nearly 600 students. Slightly over 50% of them are Black, which is above the City average. Hispanic students make up slightly more than 40% of the school's population, in line with the City average. There are also small proportions of children from White, Asian or other backgrounds. About 8% are English language learners and their most common home language is Spanish. Almost 5% are special education students, who receive instruction in self-contained or collaboratively-taught classes. The proportion of students who receive Title 1 funding is much higher than the City average. Students' attendance was 89% in 2005, which was below average.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school collects data methodically and has a good understanding of its own performance and how well this compares with that of other schools.
- Data analysis leads to well-considered realignments of the curriculum.
- The principal and her senior colleagues share a long-term vision for increased achievement in the school and a commitment to making this happen.
- The school has steadily built the capacity for stronger performance in the future.
- The staff are committed to the work and welfare of the students, who appreciate what is done for them.
- The curriculum is well organized and teachers are clear about what they should be teaching.
- The school provides at-risk students with appropriate and creative intervention.
- The school runs well on a day-to-day basis, with a clear schedule.
- The students enjoy school and feel safe there.
- The building has a range of specialist facilities and staff have worked hard to make their classrooms rich learning environments.

### What the school needs to improve

- Building on recent improvements, set more ambitious goals for the school that are understood by and agreed upon by all staff.
- Improve differentiation in classrooms so that all students are challenged to achieve their full potential.
- Provide staff with professional development in the accurate assessment of students' work and in the organization of their assessment binders.
- Improve strategies to cope with the minority of students who are repeatedly disruptive.
- When resources allow, provide more in-class support for students, particularly the youngest members of the school community.
- Aggregate and analyze data relating to the performance of ethnic groups and genders.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal has created a strong senior team that has steadily built the capacity of the school to raise achievement. Data are used proficiently in analyzing the performance of the school, setting goals for its improvement, and realigning the curriculum and instructional programs to achieve them. The school runs well on a day-to-day basis. Students feel safe, despite the repeated disruption caused by a small minority, and value the care and support given to them by the staff. Teachers and their colleagues work hard and have embraced many changes. They recognize that they have some way to go, and need more professional development to improve the quality of their instruction.

Many building blocks have been put in place to move the school forward and there are encouraging signs to show that they are beginning to be successful. The school is at a turning point where it should, and can, raise expectations of what students can achieve.

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

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school has a sound understanding of each student's progress and has put into place a well-considered strategy to build on what it already does. It collects and analyzes data from using a range of assessment instruments to compare effectively the progress of grades over time and with each other. It also compares the students' performance in different subjects and in the different skills within each subject. It recognizes that it does not yet disaggregate and analyze data to compare achievement based on either gender, ethnicity or other groupings.

The principal introduced a major innovation in November 2006 in which teachers of general and special education classes began to keep binders containing assessment data for each child. These binders will be used to chart each individual's progress, as well as the progress of the class as a whole. Teachers are still coming to terms with their use of the binders, and their quality and completeness are variable and this good practice is not yet fully embedded into the professional practice of the school. There are clear records of the progress made by students learning English, and of all students' reading levels. Teachers are able to use this data to provide more effective, individualized response to student need, so promoting the ability of all students to reach their full potential.

Parents are regularly informed of their children's progress through the report cards issued three times a year and, when intervention programs are put in place, more frequently.

At the moment there is room to develop the capacity of the school to compare itself with similar schools and to look at its own progress as a school over time.

**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 is steadily moving towards a culture of using data to set goals against which staff are held accountable. At the whole school level, the Comprehensive Education Plan includes very specific goals for improvement in particular subjects for specified grades. The goals are intended to be realistic and build towards incremental improvements in achievement, although the projected gains are modest and might well fall within the margin of error. Good examples exist of the use of whole-school data to set goals for improvement in performance in particular areas. For example, two years ago the school noted that it had weak scores in writing and launched a program to improve it, in which it has had some success. More recently, it realized that students were weak in problem solving in mathematics and a program has been implemented to remedy this.

The school sets clear goals for special education students in their individual education plans. The large proportion of students who are at risk because they perform below grade expectations are supported by programs to accelerate their learning with benchmarked targets to measure progress, and there is good practice in the school to support those at greatest risk of failing to make progress. Through the use of class assessment binders, staff are increasingly held accountable for meeting class goals. The school is in the process of setting up programs to ensure that higher achieving students maintain and improve their position. The principal is very clear that she is aiming for, over the coming years, a substantial improvement in the proportion of students who achieve level 3 or above in their tests and she has the support of the school community in this goal. Students and parents are aware of this aim and most give it their support.

**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 is well organized and aligned with mandated requirements, enabling teachers to be clear about what they should be teaching, and when. The schedule is based on a well-understood ‘flow of the day’, into which periods of specialist instruction are included to give preparation time to regular class teachers. Significant improvements have been made to the writing and mathematics programs over the past two years, which are beginning to produce improved outcomes. The curriculum is flexibly adapted to meet the learning needs of at-risk students, for example in enhanced programs in reading and supplementary classes.

Classrooms are good learning environments, rich in display. The students appreciate the help and support they receive from their teachers. The staff have embraced new approaches to the instruction they provide. This includes improvements in the differentiation of instruction, but there is still some way to go in developing teaching styles, such as conferencing techniques, to challenge each student more fully.

Budgeting is prudent and wherever possible targeted at identified needs, though current resources do not allow the recruitment of more in-class support, which is necessary to assist the learning of students, especially the youngest ones.

The school is generally calm and relationships are warm. However, a small minority of students repeatedly causes disruption, which leads to an above average level of suspensions. The school has recently introduced an internal suspension room, but there is scope for further strategies to contain and modify the behavior of these students. The school has well organized systems to deal with absences, though it struggles to bring attendance up to the City average.

**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 principal, since her appointment a little over two years ago, has enhanced the capacity of the school to raise student achievement. Difficult decisions have been made with regard to staffing, and she now has a senior team of like-minded people who share her long-term vision of raising achievement and who collaborate well in pursuit of this vision. She is widely liked and respected by staff and students. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-basis and has well understood routines.

The staff have accommodated many changes in what they do, and the culture of the school is steadily changing as more of them commit to means of generating higher outcomes for students. Professional development has been matched to the changes the school has made, but is still needed to support the differentiation of classroom activity, the assessment of students' work, and the organization of their assessment binders. The senior staff's presence around the school means that they have a good understanding of what goes on in classrooms. Walkthroughs with oral feedback are regular, and the formal lesson observations are well recorded, with clear points for improvement.

The school has a few external partnerships that support its work and has worked hard, with some success, to increase parents' participation in the school. However, parental and community involvement are still lower than the school rightly would like them to be.

**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.**

The school has a sound overview of the ongoing academic progress and welfare of the students. Its strengths in monitoring progress are in identifying whether the special education and at-risk students meet their objectives and benchmarks. Students are tested regularly, but the assessment of students' work is not consistent because staff do not fully agree on its quality and the steps necessary to improve it. Nevertheless, when a student is perceived to be falling behind, perhaps after the administration of a test, intervention is

prompt. The assessment binders represent a valuable initiative to assist teachers in documenting students' progress, but are still at an early stage of development. Short-term goals, based on data, are set for special education and at-risk students. The school demonstrates flexibility in its ability to amend programs and goals in the face of emerging evidence - goals are flexibly adjusted and support is fine-tuned, as necessary. The school's leadership is always mindful of how its current performance compares with that of previous years, but it does not monitor the progress of students by ethnic group or gender.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Cornelius Vanderbilt School (PS 014)</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>	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	
<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>	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	
<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>	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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	