



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Westerleigh School**

**Public School 30**

**200 Wardwell Avenue  
Staten Island  
NY 10314**

**Principal: Patricia Baxter**

**Dates of review: January 16 - 17, 2007**

**Reviewer: Jean Mackie**

## 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

The school is located in the Westerleigh area of Staten Island. There are 834 students enrolled from kindergarten through to grade 5. The largest ethnic group, at 70% of the student population, is White. In addition, 18% of students are Hispanic, 7% are Asian/Pacific Islander and 4% are Black. A small number of students are of American Indian/Alaskan heritage.

There are approximately 7% special education students and a further 3% who are English language learners. This proportion has shown a steady increase over the last few years. The school receives a much smaller proportion of recent arrivals to the country than City and similar schools. Those that do come are largely from Latin America and the Caribbean.

The attendance rate, at 94.7% in 2005, was above that of both City and similar schools.

The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding. Westerleigh is an exempt school, which allows it to select its own curriculum resources.

The current principal has only been in post since November, having previously held the assistant principal role within the school. There is a wide range of experience amongst the teachers, with some at the early stages of their career and others who are well established in the school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The recently appointed principal has effectively managed a smooth transition from the previous administration and has quickly established her own personal vision for the school.
- There is a strong sense of community within the school, reflected by the very positive relationships between adults and students.
- The school has a wide range of data which is used well to establish a clear picture of the overall achievements of students and to inform instructional practice.
- The curriculum is imaginative and engages the interest of the students.
- There are good examples of high quality instructional practice which is really motivating for the students.
- The corridors, and many classrooms, provide stimulating learning environments through the lively displays of students' work and curriculum support materials.
- The school has high expectations of the students, who respond well to the challenges that are set for them.
- The school provides a well-focused professional development program which is determined by whole school and individual needs.
- There is an extensive after-school center program which is very popular with both students and parents.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school and play a major role in helping their children to do their best.

### What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the systems for sharing and extending the good instructional practice within the school.
- Further develop the role of the grade leaders so that they are more closely focused on evaluating the overall quality of instruction, and its impact on student progress, through the analysis of data.
- Refine the use of data so that progress towards interim goals at both class and grade level is more easily measurable.
- Build on the good practice already present in the school to extend opportunities for group work and accountable talk.
- Use both quantitative and qualitative evaluation of student outcomes more systematically to strengthen curriculum continuity across grades.
- Ensure that there are rigorous systems in place to evaluate the impact of the writers' workshop professional development program on student progress.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The newly appointed principal has been very effective in sustaining the smooth running of the school as she transferred from her previous position as assistant principal in November of last year. She has been keen to maintain the important principles and practices that have underpinned the high expectations and the strong community culture, which have made the school very popular with students and parents alike. At the same time, she has recognized the need for the school to continue to evolve and has quickly established her own vision for the way forward. This has resulted in the introduction of some new initiatives, such as the Writers' Workshop, which are intended to build on the existing good practice in the school.

The broad and balanced curriculum and the good examples of dynamic instructional practice motivate the students to do well. There is some good use of data to underpin the work of the school, and it is recognized that further refinement of this is required to inform the next stage of the school's development. Parents are actively engaged in the education of their children and provide good support to the school. The students feel safe and secure in the welcoming and caring environment.

### 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 a wide range of data to monitor overall student performance and to check progress in reading and mathematical skills. Annual test results are scrutinized carefully to check trends and to see how the school's performance compares with those of similar schools. The Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System is administered to students in kindergarten through to grade 3, which enables teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in language. The school uses its data well to identify special education students and English language learners so that intervention strategies can be appropriately targeted at their needs. The New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test results are used to identify the overall progress that has been made by English language learners.

Teachers use their own observations and the data provided from both tests and commercial assessments carefully to check individual progress in class and to identify any overall patterns in skills or concepts that students find difficult. In grade 3, for example, inference in reading was identified as a skill that required reinforcement. Students' portfolios, which contain significant pieces of work and assessment information, are also used as a helpful resource to both record and check progress over time.

The school's systems for analyzing performance and progress data at classroom and grade level are more informal. Similarly, although the relative performance of boys and girls has been noted, procedures for tracking the performance of important sub groups such as gender and ethnicity are not as rigorous as they should be.

**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 principal's clear expectations that all students will do as well as they possibly can underpin her long-term vision for the school. These expectations have been shared with the staff who are, very largely, supportive of her goals. Improvements in outcomes are identified within the Comprehensive Education Plan, although these are based more on a notional percentage increase rather than a rigorous analysis of previous cohort data. The school has, for some time, used data to organize grade 1 through to 5 students into homogeneous classes so that the range of ability that teachers have to plan for is reduced. Early assessments at kindergarten are used to establish heterogeneous classes, with just one smaller group of children with particular needs who are then able to receive more individual support.

Teachers, in the main, use their various sources of data well to group students in their class according to need. Readers are grouped by ability, for example, so that opportunities are provided for students to share books at a similar level and for the teacher to provide focused interventions. Teachers and support staff work closely together to set meaningful but challenging goals for special education students and English language learners. Next learning steps are carefully planned. Given the less rigorous analysis of performance and progress at class and grade level, goals for these groups are more informal and broadly based on State standards.

Parents and students are well aware of the high expectations of the school. Parents fully appreciate the regular communications that take place through, for example, curriculum conferences, newsletters and calendars of events. They feel well informed about what is happening in school and how their children are progressing. The students themselves respond very positively to the challenges set for them and are keen to succeed.

**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 school provides a rich curriculum for the students. The strong focus on developing basic literacy and numeracy is well-supplemented by scientific, social, artistic and musical experiences. There is a well-supported band and an active choir. The after-school center program, providing both recreational and academic activities, is also very popular. The principal has recognized that there is a need to strengthen the use of data to ensure that the curriculum provides continuity in learning for students as they progress from one grade to the next.

Teachers recognize their responsibility for ensuring student progress and there are some very impressive examples of high quality instruction which both challenges and engages the students. Data is clearly used to inform instruction, with students carefully grouped so that all achieve as well as they can. In these classes, good opportunities are provided for accountable talk through paired and group discussion. Classrooms are often bright and inviting with lively displays of students' work and learning support materials. Practice is, however, inconsistent, so that not all students, even though they are well-focused on their work, benefit regularly from the very good practice within the school. There are extremely positive relationships within the school between all adults and students. Students feel that staff care and value them and would be happy to go to any adult with worries or concerns.

The principal has inherited a school where staffing, budgeting, and scheduling arrangements were already in place. She has a clear view about how these should develop in the future and is already planning for next year. Strong parental support helps to ensure that attendance remains above that of similar and City schools. It is still a priority, however, with clear systems to follow up any absenteeism.

**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.**

Given her short period in post, the principal has not yet had the opportunity to select and appoint her own staff. She has, however, already established a group of enthusiastic teachers to be part of an instructional team to develop the shared knowledge of best practice. In addition, the principal has identified the need to improve the students' writing skills and has put in place an extensive program to strengthen teachers' expertise in the writing workshop model. These are important initiatives but it is too early to evaluate their impact. They have been well received by a great many staff although a few are finding the developments a challenge.

Grade leaders help to facilitate communication both across and between grades, and with the administration. They also play a key role in leading curriculum planning meetings, with agendas that are often determined by an evaluation of the needs of the students. The 5th grade team, for example, has reviewed the social studies curriculum to ensure that it is fully in line with test requirements. These meetings provide valuable opportunities to share practice and encourage professional development. Feedback from classroom observations, by both the principal and the assistant principal, is also appreciated by teachers. Discussions about the implementation of curriculum developments give grade leaders a helpful perspective about their impact upon classes, but there is less of a focus on the review of data to establish a more rigorous evaluation of how well these initiatives actually affect student progress during the year.

The principal's role in ensuring a smooth transition from the previous administration has been noted and much appreciated by students, staff, and parents. She is well respected for the work that she has done to ensure the efficient running of the school on a day-to-day basis and, at the same time, for developing and sharing her own vision for the school. Her determination to do the best for all students underpins her capacity to implement the changes required to meet that vision. The well-established links that the principal has with key partners ensures that they continue to work proactively with the school to achieve its

goals for the students. Examples are the partnerships with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and the American Ballet Theater. ,

**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's Comprehensive Education Plan clearly outlines the goals to be achieved by the end of the year and the steps required to achieve them. The targets set are based on an expected improvement in achievements, although not fully based on a detailed evaluation of previous performance at each grade level. In order to reach these goals, the principal has identified through discussion, data analysis and classroom observations, the need to develop a more consistent approach to the teaching of writing. This has resulted in the drive to implement the writers' workshop model. Recognition that further support was required for the increasing number of English language learners has resulted in the recent appointment of a full time teacher with expertise in several languages.

Team meetings within the school, the analysis of interim assessments, and informal discussions enable the administration and staff to gain a general overview of the progress of students during the year. The analysis is not yet sufficiently refined, however, to assess the impact of actions at class and grade level. Initial evaluations suggest that the increased support for English language learners is proving to be beneficial.

The principal recognizes the need to be more systematic about tracking progress at a strategic level and is already considering ways to do so. She is clear about the next steps to be taken and is well placed to take the school into its next stage of development.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Westerleigh School (PS030)</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	