



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Giffords School

Public School 32

**32 Elverton Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10308**

Principal: Nancy Spataro

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Reviewer: Barbara Kwiecinski

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Giffords School is the only empowerment school on Staten Island. It caters for the needs of 985 students from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Eighty seven percent of the students are White, which is much higher than most similar schools and New York City schools. One percent of students are Black, 6% Hispanic and 6% Asian or others. Eleven percent of the students are special education students and 2.3% are English language learners. The school does not receive Title 1 funding. The school's attendance figure is 94.2% which is higher than New York City averages.

The principal has been in post for three years and during this time the school has undergone many very positive changes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Public School 32 provides all students with an exemplary educational program based on their individual needs, resulting in high performance.
- The energy and the role model provided by the principal result in all faculty engaging in a learning journey where they continually self assess their instruction and improve student learning.
- Students love coming to school and the many enrichment programs add a very positive dimension to their learning journey.
- The school is data rich and very effectively tracks students' progress, including the progress of the many groups within the school.
- The school is a 'family' where staff, parents and community work tirelessly to support all students' need.
- Teachers are empowered and there are numerous examples of team work and interventions to support students' learning.
- Every process in the school is very clear with short and long term goals and built in evaluation.
- The very high quality classroom and corridor displays reinforce learning and students talk proudly of their accomplishments which emulate the principles of learning.
- 'The Enrichment through the Arts and Sciences' program is distinctive and students produce very high quality work.
- The principal communicates very clearly with teachers, parents and students, setting high expectations with respect to academic and personal outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop the very good use of technology to further support the curriculum and independent student learning.
- Continue the on going implementation of differentiated instruction to address different learning styles.
- Continue to develop reading conferences and further share the very good practice that exists within the school.
- Continue to celebrate the students' successes through this innovative, caring, supportive family school.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

From the moment you walk into Giffords School you are struck by the quality of the educational environment. Displays in the corridors and classrooms are of the highest standard. Not only do they reinforce learning but they clearly show the high expectations made of all faculty and students. The school has created a family of teachers, parents and community members who work together to develop concerned, skillful and creative citizens. The newly refurbished library, run by a licensed librarian, is an excellent example of how the principal works tirelessly to do everything possible to support the students on their learning journey.

Teachers and parents talk about the school with pride and applaud the many initiatives the principal has undertaken since her appointment at the school. She always follows things through, is approachable and open to new ideas. For example, teachers are empowered and if they have an idea which supports learning the principal always ensures that it is refined and has an action plan with measurable outcomes.

Every classroom has a child friendly mission statement that was created by the classroom teacher and the students. These capture the individual nature of each class and reinforce collaboration. The school has a science department and students enjoy practical science in fully furnished laboratories. There is also a social studies department, a computer teacher and music teachers. This is unusual in an elementary school and has a very positive effect on students' engagement and progress. The school is very effectively using periodic assessments to generate data and this is helping the faculty to focus on the learning needs of each child.

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 gathers data from many sources in order to understand student performance. Wherever possible the data is displayed visually and palm pilots are being used very effectively with ECLAS and DIBELS to make tracking even easier in the lower grades. Data is reviewed systematically on a weekly basis and this results in all of the faculty understanding student performance at individual, classroom and grade level. The approach is consistent and this allows teachers to identify students' weaknesses and to target support accordingly.

Data is continually upgraded and is thoroughly reviewed at faculty and grade level conferences as well as at leadership team meetings. In addition the administrators collect and evaluate writing, reading and mathematics samples of student work on a monthly basis. Teachers receive formal feedback and any under performance by students is challenged. This has resulted in accurate comparisons being made in progress between subjects; teachers adapting their instruction and students making very good progress.

The school sets high standards and uses data to look at the progress of the different groups of students within the school. Third grade at risk students are very well supported through a tutoring program where they work one-to-one with a teacher twice a week. This individual support is having a very positive effect on their progress. In addition, when there seems to be a barrier to progress psychological testing takes place and the analysis provides additional information and directs instruction. The school continually compares student performance within classrooms, grade levels, and academic subjects and is proud that results are improving year on year. Teachers visit other schools and there is a culture of dialogue where good practice is shared and practice is adapted to support each student's unique talents, abilities and learning styles.

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.

Collaboration underpins everything that happens within the school. There is strong communication between the school leaders and faculty and a staff resource guide clearly explains school statistics and expectations. The resource guide is a working document and is frequently updated by the principal. This additional communication complements the grade level meetings, instructional team meetings and faculty conferences, where measurable goals are set and plans with measurable timeframes and outputs are continually revised. In addition the principal communicates formally with faculty through a monthly 'principal's memo'.

The school takes great pride in the clarity of data use and wherever possible this is displayed visually. Technology is effectively used and spreadsheets compare student achievement data with their goals and achievements. The spreadsheets also include the intervention strategies that have been used and evaluation of their effectiveness. All students are surveyed in June and the principal sends letters to each teacher in September and meets with them on a one to one basis to look at student levels. Teachers then write their individual grade level instructional goals for each year. These are formally reviewed twice a year. This formalized, open and transparent process identifies trends and results in teachers working together to find the most appropriate ways of supporting students where weaknesses are identified.

Students with the greatest need are well supported including English language learners and special education students. The teachers in the collaborative team teaching classes work well together and use different strategies to meet student need. The school has implemented many supplementary programs to improve the performance of all learners including Soar to Success and Accelerated Reader.

The informative parent handbook not only contains information on dates and procedures but includes performance standards and rubrics for each grade. These are also contained in student diaries. Parents and students are all aware of the school's high expectations and are fully involved in the goal setting process. Based on survey responses the parent co-ordinator manages workshops that are effective in meeting parent needs. In addition the principal hosts a tea with parents from each grade level to answer questions about curriculum and testing. This results in focused parental support.

The school works strategically to improve student performance. The comprehensive education plan drives the goal setting process and is modified and updated. Goals and plans drive the activity of all members of the school community. Trends are identified and if weaknesses are found there is a clear link to professional development.

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 is proud to have instituted an ‘Enrichment through the Arts and Sciences’ program. This is very effective in engaging fourth and fifth grade students, who participate in small group arts enrichment. Students speak very positively of these activities and band, dance and chorus are just some of the activities that add another dimension to the mandated curriculum. Teachers meet individually as well as in grade meetings with administration to improve instructional programs based on student data. There are many examples of different types of instruction which are implemented based on data analysis in literacy and mathematics. These include Wilson instruction to target fluency and Foundations to target sound and letter recognition. All of the interventions are evaluated to assess their effectiveness and support students to meet their aspirational goals

Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and self evaluation sheets are in place and are very effective in helping teachers to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. The school operates a ‘bottom line philosophy’ which focuses on the principles of learning. This has resulted in all teachers creating a positive and supportive educational learning environment with successful student outcomes. All members of the school community share accountability including providing model classrooms, conferencing and utilizing data to differentiate instruction. Techniques associated with reading conferences are one of the school’s foci for improvement. The examples of good classroom practice are being shared.

Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and the very active parent teacher association provides additional financial support so that students have air conditioning and computers. Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher time are driven by the needs of the students. Students talk confidently of school curriculum. They like the extra support they get in small group differentiated instruction. Literature circles, to teach reading with higher order thinking skills, are described very positively by students. Technology is used but could be further developed to support individual student learning.

Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. The parent teacher association has over one hundred and fifty executive board members who work actively with the parent coordinator on curriculum issues. Students love coming to school and are actively engaged in their learning journey. They speak very positively about teachers and feel supported in both their personal and academic needs. They enjoy reading to the principal and feel proud that she takes time for each individual.

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.

Professional development needs are very well aligned to school goals and targets. An annual needs assessment is carried out by administration to identify personal developmental need. The school is always looking at creative ways to improve student outcomes and teachers are trained in specific topics which they develop and share with colleagues. The staff are selected on their capacity to use data and their desire to work in a school that strives for excellence and builds in accountability to all processes. An example of this is the appointment of a new assistant principal who has a background in data analysis and literacy.

The principal and assistant principals frequently observe lessons both formally and informally. Expectations are clear and feedback is very well structured with measurable outcomes. Teachers performing well share best practice during in house professional development and complimentary letters are added to their files. The principal has taken the faculty on a rapid learning journey since her appointment and has the capacity to effect even greater change. The collegiality and the desire of all of the faculty to provide an exemplary education for the youngsters results in informal conversations on goals and plans adding to the many formal meetings. Teachers are candid about their results and are always trying to improve. The school has many partnerships with outside bodies and the school council members speak proudly of their activities.

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.

There are clear links between the Comprehensive Education Plan and classroom planning. Each plan and intervention has measurable interim goals. The school constantly interrogates the data and comparisons of student progress are made within and across classrooms. Teachers are held accountable and there is a clear link between planned instruction, student performance and evaluation of effectiveness of intervention.

When plans are not having the impact on student learning all avenues are explored to identify the problem. The pupil personnel team work collaboratively and when plans are not working they are revised immediately.

Spreadsheets from periodic assessments identify the strengths and weakness of each student. Goals are revisited and instruction is adapted accordingly. The goal setting process has great clarity and success criteria are built in at frequent intervals. Re-evaluation and realignment is on-going.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Name of School Giffords School (PS 32)	∅	✓	+
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