



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**S.S. Columbia School**

**Public School 58**

**77 Marsh Avenue  
Staten Island  
NY 10314**

**Principal: Joseph Santello**

**Dates of review: February 6 - 7, 2007**

**Reviewer: Jo Storrs**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

S.S. Columbia School is situated on Staten Island, with 757 students enrolled from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 55.3% White, 20.3% Hispanic, 5.3% Black, and 19% Asian. About 11% are English language learners with no predominant first language. Nearly 11% are special education learners in self-contained and collaborative team teaching classes. The school is Title 1 eligible with 35.3% of students qualifying; above average for similar but well-below the average for City schools. In 2005, attendance was 93.2%, higher than the averages for similar and City schools.

The school opened in 2003 with a full complement of students. It is dedicated to the crew of the spaceship Columbus and maintains links with NASA. It is accommodated in a spacious 'state of the art' building with excellent facilities; one wing houses a District 75 school. Retention is good.

The school has fruitful partnerships with community-based organizations such as the Jewish Community Center, providing English language classes for parents and an expanded arts program for all students. Special after-school programs support students' performance in language, literacy and mathematics.

The principal was on long-term sick leave during the review so the lead building supervisor (who is one of the assistant principals) managed the school supported by the assistant principal, cabinet and a mentor principal for several days a week.

## Part 2: Overview

### **What the school does well**

- The lead building supervisor is providing very good leadership to the school.
- There are very high expectations for the school and each student.
- The highly effective cabinet is a collaborative team dedicated to creating a vibrant learning environment for every student.
- Very good systems enable the cabinet to use data effectively to drive decision making and improvements.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and share the high expectations of the cabinet.
- Excellent academic intervention services improve the performance and progress of students in greatest need.
- A culture of critical review permeates the school to improve planning and instruction so students make the best possible progress.
- A significant percentage of good instruction engages students so they are well-motivated and confident learners.
- Parents are very pleased with the school and actively support their children's education.
- Relationships across the school are excellent so students enjoy learning and all the activities the school offers.

### ***What the school needs to improve***

- Further refine goals at school and grade level to include specific, measurable benchmarks.
- Continue to devise ways to summarize individual student data so it provides a strategic over-view of their attainment and identifies progress by class and grade.
- Consider additional ways to challenge higher-achieving students.
- Further develop students' ability to assess their own work and set personal targets.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

S.S. Columbia School lives its mission to create lifelong learners by providing a 'supportive and intellectually challenging learning environment'. There are high expectations and a rich environment that enables students to excel. The lead building supervisor provides very good leadership and is respected and valued by the whole school community. She has established collegiate, distributive leadership across the school and forms a highly effective team with the cabinet. The curriculum is broad and enhanced by arts and technology. Students enjoy learning and make very good progress. Parents are delighted with their children's achievements.

Very good systems to gather and examine data ensure decisions are informed by current information and a culture of candid evaluation results in goals, plans and instruction regularly aligned to students' needs. Teachers set high standards and are keen to try new approaches to enhance learning. Consequently, nearly all teaching is good and engages students. The academic intervention services provide excellent support for the students at risk. Administration, faculty and staff know students well; they are devoted to providing for students' personal and academic development. Progress and achievement are further enhanced by the excellent care and support for students, particularly those who need extra help. There is a mutual respect and excellent relationships between administration, faculty, staff and students.

### 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 very good systems enable the highly effective cabinet to collect and organize all available data meticulously. Interim, diagnostic tests and informative, grade-generated assessments supplement standardized test data. Equally, comparisons between subjects, grades, classes, individuals, groups of students and similar schools inform goals. Consistent approaches of data collection for literacy and mathematics enable meaningful reviews of students' progress. Reading and writing are assessed systematically through monthly reading tests, folders of students' writing and detailed conferencing records. Similarly, baseline tests precede regular interim assessments to identify students' mathematical understanding. This information enables teachers to spot students' weaknesses and to target support accordingly. Ways to summarize individual student data are being devised to provide a strategic overview of each student's attainment and to identify progress by class and grade more easily. This detailed knowledge of each student's learning requirements drives instructional goals and the allocation of academic groups.

The main concern is to raise the achievement of students performing at low levels in each grade or in danger of being held back. Another key group is the English language learners, some of whom inevitably perform at lower levels initially. Their data is methodically collected and analyzed for all levels and checked frequently to gauge their acquisition of literacy skills. Equally precise data is kept on the special education students who subsequently receive excellent support to meet the goals of their individual education plans. Enrichment goals are in place for higher-achieving students and additional ways to plan lessons and instruction to further challenge these students are being developed. All information is shared and discussed systematically at cabinet meetings. Consequently results have improved in City and State tests examinations over the last three years and the school achieved adequate yearly progress.

**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.**

The inclusive approach in which every student is special is evident in the lively, collaborative approach to planning and goal setting across the school. All available data gathered and analyzed provides the cabinet with a clear view of the school’s performance. The cabinet is highly effective with an open style of management so everything is shared with staff. Teachers are involved and committed, so data informs planning, goal-setting and decision-making at all levels. The cabinet sets a good working model, reflected by grade and subject teams involving every teacher. The results of their reviews feed into the school leadership team’s discussions culminating in the school’s clearly expressed Comprehensive Education Plan. This provides an overview with goals focused on students’ needs and enrichment programs. It is the working document for all members of the school community. The needs of students are met effectively through this process and goals are being refined to include specific, measurable benchmarks at both school and grade level so students’ progress can easily be monitored.

Coaches provide valuable support for all teachers to set goals and plan in literacy and mathematics. Teachers are enthusiastic, keen to try new approaches and share the cabinet’s high expectations. They are skilled in assessment, observation and conferencing techniques, which inform discussions leading to new goals being set to improve learning. The exceptional guidance counselor is an active member of the cabinet. With talented staff she provides excellent academic intervention provision that is regularly refined to closely match needs. Consequently, all students make very good progress and English language learners make the expected yearly progress.

Students and parents support the school’s high expectations for attendance, behavior, performance and homework. The active parents association and conscientious parent coordinator work tirelessly to engage parents in their children’s education. They provide a range of detailed information and organize numerous well-attended events. Parents appreciate the approachability of administration, faculty and staff and recognize how well the school cares for their children.

**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.**

In their mission to achieve a high-quality education, the cabinet used data to design a curriculum focused on developing literacy and mathematical skills; that meets mandatory requirements and provides breadth, depth and quality in a range of ways including art, music and dance. The wonderful facilities for science, technology and physical education provide exceptional support to the development of students’ skills. Every classroom and corridor is alive with helpful rubrics and attractive displays of student’s class work and the creation of areas such as the imitation rainforest with associated sounds provides a vibrant learning environment. Students find learning exciting. After-school support and a choice of interesting activities provide extra help and challenge for students.

High expectations of teachers’ accountability are set out in the comprehensive education plan. Teachers recognize their accountability for students’ progress and enthusiastically promote them. A culture of critical review permeates the school to improve planning and instruction within a student-centered environment. Adherence to this is checked rigorously by clearly-focused walkthroughs by administration and cabinet. Administration meets regularly with teachers to check their data and to adjust instruction if any gaps are revealed by these processes. A high percentage of lively, differentiated class and group instruction engages students so they are well motivated and engaged. Budgeting and staffing are top priorities for the school as exemplified by the way the staff is carefully deployed to make optimum use of their skills. The well-organized resources provide exceptional support for teachers and students undertaking independent research projects in social studies. Decisions are based entirely on need and scheduling successfully meets the needs of students. For example, extra teachers and bilingual books are helping English language learners make good progress and enjoy learning.

The cabinet sets a good example in their respect of staff, students and parents. This is reflected across the school, so students feel respected and valued as individuals; they have a number of teachers and staff they trust. Parents endorse good attendance because of its link with student progress. Any absences are followed up swiftly and as a result, attendance is above the average for similar and City schools.

**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.**

Leaders and staff were hand picked for their expertise and willingness to implement the school’s culture and values. Administration ensures teachers know how to use data and has created a hard-working faculty, enthusiastically pursuing their high expectations of students. Teachers are professional and candid in their evaluations of data, planning and instruction. They form very good relationships with students. Attention is given to on-going professional development to ensure teachers’ skills are constantly refined. The extensive program ideally balances whole school, group and individual training events held in school or at outside venues. One strength is ‘working lunches’ led by teachers with expertise in a field. Another is the establishment of the grade meetings that provide

valuable opportunities to discuss and make considered decisions such as how best to link writing and research skills with social studies. These activities have made the school a learning community. The lead building supervisor and assistant principal observe all teachers formally and through regular walkthroughs. This leads to constructive feedback and written summary findings. Teachers appreciate these procedures especially as their active involvement enables them to gain from observing other colleagues' approaches to instruction.

The lead building supervisor is providing very good leadership to the school. She recognizes the value of involving everyone in planning and evaluating the school's work and delegates effectively to cabinet members, who in turn work harmoniously with faculty and staff. This ensures everyone is working towards the same goals. Teachers value this involvement. Morale is high and has a positive impact on students' learning. Similarly, the lead building supervisor, assistant principal and cabinet have earned the respect and admiration of all members of the school community who solidly support their drive for high standards in all aspects of school life. This extends to the clear systems and procedures and close attention to detail which ensures the school runs smoothly and efficiently. The school reaches out to numerous outside professional organizations, community groups and support services from which students and faculty benefit.

**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.**

Rigorous monitoring is one of the school's strengths and is allied to professional development. To ensure that monitoring has impact, there are a range of procedures, at the heart of which are the purposeful team meetings at grade, cabinet and administration levels. Teams interlink and each one has clear functions which are followed conscientiously. From an analysis of the previous year's results to set goals, the leadership team set supporting goals that are evaluated periodically with adjustment made when required. Teachers make good use of test data individually. In collaboration with coaches they use baseline information to set their goals and determine the next steps. As a result of these consistent procedures, teachers and the cabinet are constantly aware of students' attainments and their progress. Teachers regularly track the progress of individual students and groups through observations and one-to-one conferencing with diagnostic testing when required. Students are involved in evaluating their own progress and setting personal goals but this is not consistent in all subject areas.

All decisions are reached collaboratively and focus on improving learning. The cohesive administration and cabinet work in harmony to move the school forward. They are committed to monitoring and meet weekly to review progress, to set new plans and to unify their activities. An important aspect of monitoring is regular walkthroughs, which focus upon a particular theme. These are conducted by administration and provide invaluable information which is documented in detail and may lead to realignment of practices, professional development or a revision of plans. Through these effective monitoring procedures the administration demonstrates its constant determination to achieve excellence.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: S.S. Columbia School (PS 58)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.		<b>X</b>	
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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