



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Robert Randall School

Public School 373

**91 Henderson Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10301**

Principal: Michael Zangwill

Dates of review: April 19 - 20, 2007

Reviewer: Jeffery Plumb

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Robert Randall School serves 325 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6 with a wide range of special educational needs across three sites. There are three distinct student populations. There are students with severe emotional difficulties who follow the mandated curriculum and take the standardized tests. Then there are the alternate assessment students who are made up of autistic students and a few with more severe learning difficulties. A number of students are fully included in classes with general education students on the two shared co-located sites. All students have individual education plans and a significant number receive mandated related services.

Thirty-nine percent of students are Black, 35% White, 22% Hispanic, 2% Asian and a small proportion is other. Five percent of students are English language learners. The dominant language for the English language learners is Spanish. There are significantly more boys than girls, particularly in the classes for students with severe emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's leadership is outstanding.
- The Power of Choice Behavior Program is very effective in improving students' behavior.
- The school services the needs of the autistic students exceptionally well by providing them with a wide range of curriculum choices.
- Strong collaboration between the teachers and related service staff enhances sensory processing and motor skills of the alternate students very well.
- Very effective use is made of data to track students and to inform planning to raise their achievement.
- The on-site program for training paraprofessionals is excellent.
- The inclusion program is successful and results in a significant number of students returning to a less restrictive environment.
- The technology program is very good.
- The parents are effectively involved in setting achievement and behavior targets for their children.
- Augmentative communication devices and systems are used effectively to enable students to make and communicate informed and independent choices.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all teachers conference consistently with students with severe emotional and behavioral difficulties.
- Continue to develop the sensory curriculum for the students with the most severe learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Gather more robust data about the performance of the different ethnic groups represented in the school.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

This is a very effective school. The principal's vision is that as many students as possible will return to a less restrictive environment as early as possible is shared by all staff. This is a self-critical school in which teachers and related service staff work collaboratively to support students' communication and independence skills. Excellent information technology and a range of augmentative aids are used effectively to enhance students' writing and communication skills. The Positive Behavior of Choice Program improves the behavior of students with emotional and behavioral difficulties so that many can be successfully integrated with mainstream general education students on the co-located sites. Inclusion is a strong feature. The teachers' resource room and the on-site training and professional development of paraprofessionals are well developed features.

The administration uses data daily to assess how effective its plans are in meeting the needs of the students. Teachers and related service staff constantly review student performance data and modify or change their instruction to raise student achievement. Tracking of student progress over time is a strong feature, but some teachers are more skilled than others when conferencing with students with severe emotional and behavioral difficulties about their reading and writing. The innovative curriculum for autistic students is of high quality and not complacent and the administration is developing the sensory curriculum even further. The capacity for further improvement in this school is excellent.

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 and uses a wide range of teacher assessment and test data to build up a picture of what both standardized and alternate assessment students know and can do. The administration uses this data very effectively to track student progress over time. Brigance data is used to track the progress of students with the most severe learning difficulties and disabilities. It informs personalized action plans to develop important life skills for them, such as independent toileting as well as improving their communication skills. Regular testing of the standardized students SIE 7 students (that is students with severe emotional and behavioral difficulties) generates data about their performance in English language arts and mathematics. It is used to set goals to raise their achievement. Class data is analyzed to compare improvement in behavior and academic performance across the different classes. This triggers important interventions such as the allocation of a male role model paraprofessional to a particular class where a group of boys present the teacher with very challenging behavior.

Data about the performance of different ethnic groups is not gathered. Robust data about the performance of English language learners is gathered and used to raise their achievement. Evidence supports that standards for these students are rising. Related services staff gathers and uses data about the motor skill and speech needs of students

with the most severe difficulties to raise their achievement. Both the students with severe emotional difficulties and autism are very vulnerable. Data is shared collaboratively amongst all adults who support both populations of students to improve their emotional, academic and social development.

The school is diligent in comparing how well it performs measured against similar schools in the standardized tests. Data is used to compare past and present performance. Performance in behavior across SIE 7 classes is honed in on through data analysis, as this is the primary need on the individual education plans for students with severe emotional difficulties. Currently the school is investigating data to establish why students appear to perform better in mathematics than English language arts.

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.

Organizational structures put in place by the principal enable various groups of professionals to meet regularly to review and revise goals to improve the instructional practice and to accelerate learning for both populations of students. Teachers and therapists meet regularly and use data to review and revise motor skill development and communication goals for students with autism and severe and learning difficulties. They are at an earlier stage of development in using data to plan to improve the social imagination skills of autistic students. The long-term goal for students with severe emotional difficulties is to return them to a less restrictive learning environment. This school is very successful in doing so, because it sets each student clear interim goals to achieve along their journey to reach their ultimate goal of returning full-time to a general education setting.

All students are a particular focus. However, data has been analyzed in a very careful and fine tuned manner to trigger push-in and pull-out therapist support for autistic and severe learning students. It has shaped a high quality instructional program to develop their physical skills and social skills of taking turns. Activities are skillfully planned to enable them to improve their hand eye coordination. Data has also been used to shape mathematics instruction based on groups according to their ability in the standardized student population. This has led to a significant improvement in their test scores.

The school is particularly adept at conveying high expectations to students and parents. It works in an effective partnership with parents to support them in developing programs at home to help their children accelerate their learning. Students join their individual education plan meetings and so are involved in setting targets to improve their performance. Through a regularly scheduled meeting between class teachers, guidance counselors and students, the students participate in setting goals to improve their behavior. Students’ needs shown by data drive the activity of all stakeholders in the school community. The driving goal is a less restrictive learning environment for each student. The school’s inclusion program lies at the heart of its success.

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.

An innovative and flexible curriculum has been shaped based on students' needs as revealed by data. Each autistic student has a personalized program to develop her or his communication and life skills needs. Therapists and teachers work as strong partners to ensure that the curriculum for these students is planned effectively and that it focuses on achievement outcomes for them. Analysis of test scores triggers academic intervention service programs for standardized students. A few students have been identified as gifted within the context of this school using data and a suitable curriculum plan has been put in place for them.

Teachers are held accountable for their performance by the principal. He communicates to the teachers' clear pedagogy expectations and regularly monitors their planning. Scrutiny of short-term lesson plans across the sites during the review confirms that teachers consistently plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs as revealed by student data. Very good budget, staffing and scheduling decisions are made based on student needs as revealed by data. Analysis of writing across the school identified weaknesses and a decision was made to invest in information technology to support the students with their writing. This has paid dividends in improving students writing skills. It helps teachers to differentiate their instruction and engages students with writing exceptionally well. Based on an analysis of the number of standardized students operating below grade level the decision was made by the principal to employ his own literacy and numeracy coaches. Standards have risen considerably in mathematics, but not yet in English language arts. Academic, subjects are scheduled at the start of the day to raise students' achievement when they are most alert. Afternoon sessions focus more sharply on students' motor and sensory processing development.

Instructional practice is consistently engaging across all three sites. Short-term lesson planning is a strong feature of the good instruction. Learning objectives are clear and the best plans have specific achievement outcomes for individual students. Therapists and teachers work collaboratively in lessons to develop students' communication and motor skills. The sensory activities greatly benefit autistic students, but not all teachers are yet confident in using a sensory approach in their teaching. Students say that they enjoy their lessons and that they feel safe at school. They say that they have an adult they can trust and talk to about anything that bothers them. The autistic coach is very good at ensuring that the non-verbal or limited verbal students' views are taken into consideration, using a picture exchange system to facilitate this. Attendance is significantly higher than similar schools. There is a very good reward system for good attendance and the parent outreach teacher takes decisive action when following up absences.

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.

The principal is highly respected by all stakeholders in the school community. Students say, 'He supports us when we have a bad day'. Staff and parents could not speak more highly of him. All say that the school on a day to day basis runs like a well-oiled machine across all sites.

When interviewing prospective candidates for teaching posts they are asked specific questions about their understanding and use of data. Specific questions focus on their understanding of the grow report and the Princeton data. Those wanting to work with autistic students are asked questions about the skills they have in using discrete trial programs. The principal regularly observes lessons and gives teachers positive and constructive feedback. There is a supportive model of peer observations for the sharing of good practice.

The literacy and numeracy coaches meet regularly with the test coordinator and scrutinize test data. Decisive actions are taken from these meetings to re-align goals to accelerate learning. In addition, the mathematics coach works with pairs of teachers to improve their understanding of the interim progress assessments. From this improvement action plans to raise achievement in mathematics are put in place. This is just one example of many similar actions to improve student performance which spring from excellent professional development. There is a very good range of partnerships with outside bodies, such as Learning for Life which enhance students' learning and acquisition of important social skills. This particular organization enables them to have a residential camping experience and develop important life skills such as cooking.

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.

Frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress reveal how successful the Comprehensive Education Plan is in reaching its stated long-term goals. This plan encompasses differences across the sites and all staff members are aware of the part they have to play in implementing the priorities in the plan. Small gains in improved behavior are measured and stepping stones logged towards students' long-term goal of being returned to a fulltime general education setting. Assessments are constantly reviewed to support students with autism in their quest to improve their communication and independence.

Comparisons of progress within classes and across classes and different sites are made daily in respect of behavior and the effectiveness of instructional practice for autistic students. Regular assessments of students are used to trigger push in and pull out interventions by related service staff. Plans and goals are constantly revised using data generated from periodic assessments. Behavior plans are constantly reviewed and revised and new behavioral goals are set. Based on data, goals for speech and language and occupational therapy are revised on a weekly basis. Data is used effectively to realign instructional practice and best place resources in this successful school which plans with flexibility and agility. Additionally, parents are involved in regular modification of communication goals for their children.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

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| SCHOOL NAME: The Robert Randall School (PS 373R) | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| Quality Score | | | X |

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| 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.

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| 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 |

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| 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. | ∅ | ✓ | + |
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| 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 |