



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Port Morris School
Public School 5**

**564 Jackson Avenue
Bronx
NY 10455**

Principal: Mary Padilla

Dates of review: January 23 - 24, 2007

Reviewer: Chip Morrison

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

Public School 5 is a small elementary school in the Port Morris area of the Bronx, currently serving 579 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Approximately 74% of students are Hispanic and 26% Black, with small numbers of Asian and White students. About 6% are special education students and 23% are English language learners. The school receives Title I funding, with nearly 89% of students eligible.

Average attendance is 91%, which is roughly comparable to that for similar schools in the City. The school has been experiencing especially high rates of student mobility. In the first four months of the current academic year, 142 students left the school and 176 students were newly admitted.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is an especially strong instructional leader with a clear vision for instructional quality, shared by other members of her highly-qualified leadership team.
- The principal and her leadership team combine high expectations for teachers with strong supports for professional learning.
- A well-developed system of assessment binders strengthens professional accountability while providing documentation of individual student learning.
- The principal and her instructional leaders pay close attention to what is going on in classrooms.
- Teachers have a clear understanding of the learning goals at each grade level, and a strong sense of accountability for helping all students meet these goals.
- Classroom routines and rituals are well-established, resulting in classroom cultures that are particularly conducive to learning.
- Teachers make good use of instructional time, shifting fluently back and forth between whole-class, independent practice, and small-group learning.
- There is a strong and effective emphasis on having students read for pleasure at their independent reading level.
- The principal is a good manager of resources, allocating the budget, human resources and the schedule to maximize support for learning.
- A strong sense of community and teamwork pervades the school, encouraging collaboration and group accountability for meeting goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Begin setting specific, quantitative, challenging goals for aggregate improvement and closely monitor progress towards these goals at regular intervals.
- Continue to work on more effective differentiation of classroom instruction, ensuring that all students are sufficiently challenged.
- Extend the analysis of performance data to include looking at the relative achievement of ethnic groups and other groups of interest to the school.
- Explore the use of consistent analytic scoring rubrics as a way of collecting data on the quality of student writing across grade levels and subject areas.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The principal is a strong instructional leader who has managed, during her six years at the school, to cultivate a culture of high expectations for academic excellence, backed by deep, broad-based supports for both teachers and students. She and her capable leadership team have also managed to cultivate a sense of community and family feeling among teachers and students alike. As a result of this combination of factors, the current administration has made significant strides toward developing a school that is capable of moving all students forward academically.

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 makes effective use of existing student performance data to identify academic needs and track progress over time. In addition to data from mandated assessments, the school uses a range of assessments to track the early development of reading skills, another system for higher-performing students, and one for tracking Spanish literacy in bilingual students. Unit tests in mathematics are also used as a measure of progress.

At the classroom level, teachers maintain separate assessment binders for both English language arts and mathematics. These binders contain careful documentation of individual student learning through a combination of test score reports, student work, running records, and conference notes. Teachers use rubrics to evaluate student written work, but the school does not yet have consistent system for monitoring the quality of student writing on a schoolwide basis.

The school has also begun tracking the value-added performance of individual students and grade-level cohorts over time as a means of getting a clearer picture of the impact that instruction is having on students, including individuals and groups. The principal and her assistant principal use this information to identify exemplary teachers as well as those who may require professional development and classroom support from coaches. The school does not as yet regularly generate its own data to answer specific questions of its own.

Leaders pay close attention to data that shows how students perform in comparison to students in similar schools. They frequently visit high-performing schools to learn from their best practices. There is a special emphasis on gathering data on English language learners as a group, and tracking their progress over time, although the analysis of performance by ethnicity receives less focus.

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.

From their data collection, teachers have a solid understanding of each child’s strengths and next steps. They are well acquainted with what students are supposed to know and be able to do by the end of the year. While the ultimate goal is to have all students meeting or exceeding these standards, the day-to-day focus is on identifying individual needs, then targeting instruction to meet those needs. The school is at a beginning stage of collectively setting interim aggregate goals for group performance, including classrooms, and grade levels.

Teachers meet formally at least once each week in grade meetings to discuss progress and plan next steps. Many teachers also meet together informally during lunch and after school to share ideas and plan together. Academic support teams meet regularly to discuss individual cases of struggling students. There is an emphasis on meeting the needs of English language learners. Bilingual classes in Spanish at each grade level help to ensure that Spanish-dominant students can keep up with their content-area learning while developing their English language skills. Teachers use the results of a State assessment to track the progress of these students.

Considerable effort goes into helping parents support their children’s learning. Many teachers send a weekly schedule to parents so they can monitor homework completion. Parents are required to monitor student reading (at least 30 minutes each day), and sign off using a provided form. During parent conferences, teachers explain where the child is academically, what the specific goals are, and what is being done to help ensure they can be met. As a result, parents have a better understanding of what they can do to help.

While parent engagement and support for learning at home are not as strong as the school would like, generally speaking, the entire school community is strongly focused on helping to ensure that all students make progress toward reaching challenging standards.

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 has successfully implemented a balanced literacy approach that combines an emphasis on basic elements of reading with daily writing and extensive independent reading. The Teachers’ College reading and writing units of study form the backbone of the literacy curriculum. The literacy coach, a knowledgeable and skillful mentor, has been especially effective at helping teachers understand, plan, and implement this curriculum. All classrooms have well-stocked classroom libraries that are sorted by reading level and genre. Student reading levels are carefully tracked, and there are clear goals for each student’s progress. As with literacy instruction, the mathematics curriculum is also organized around a workshop model, and, with good support from a part-time mathematics coach, is well implemented.

Teachers are held accountable, and hold themselves accountable, for moving each student along a learning continuum, with grade-level mastery of standards the goal for all students. The assessment binders in mathematics and language arts document emerging student strengths and needs on a daily basis. Teachers are held accountable for maintaining their assessment binders and for engaging students in instructional activities that address identified needs. Planning occurs formally in regular grade-level meetings, and informally, on a voluntary basis, during lunch and after school.

The principal is an especially skillful manager of resources. Budgeting, staffing, and scheduling decisions are focused on improving student outcomes. For example, the schedule has been altered to create an additional tutorial session each day during which academic support staff work with small groups of students on targeted skills in key areas of the tested curriculum. Instead of daily 37.5 minute extended-day sessions, the school provides three 50-minute sessions each week, thus giving teachers longer blocks of time with students, leading to more efficient use of instructional time. Also, the principal has used her budget to hire additional teachers as a means of reducing class size at each grade level. The schedule has also been arranged in such a way to provide weekly common planning time for each grade level, as well as for regular meetings times for subject-area teachers, for specialists, and for first-year teachers.

Teachers skillfully combine whole-class instruction with small-group activities, often in homogeneous groups. While others are engaged in small-group activities, teachers work with individual students or groups with similar needs. Activities are often, but not always, differentiated to the needs of individual learners. In some of the lessons we observed, students were engaged in activities that seemed insufficiently challenging. At other times, it seemed that the struggles of some students went unnoticed.

A full array of services, including counseling and social work outreach, is available for students in need. Teachers take collective responsibility for identifying students in distress, and getting them help. A bilingual social work intern focuses on the Spanish-speaking students. While attendance, at approximately 91%, is comparable to that for similar schools, it has been identified as an area of concern. Prolonged absences and frequent tardiness trigger immediate attention.

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 school has managed to attract a core group of energetic, well-educated teachers who appreciate and make good use of the professional learning opportunities that are embedded into the school's day-to-day activities. The staff selection process is rigorous and takes place over several days, during which candidates meet with instructional leaders to plan a lesson, observe an experienced teacher, then demonstrate a lesson of their own. A candidate's ability to use quantitative data is an important secondary consideration.

The school has developed an especially strong culture of professional learning and collaborative planning. Teachers express heartfelt appreciation for the support they receive from supervisors, coaches, and other teachers. As noted above, teachers participate in weekly grade-level meetings to plan, discuss progress, review student work, review results of interim assessments, and share ideas with each other. Grade-level

teachers also regularly meet for lunch, during which time they talk about their students and classes.

The principal, assistant principal and coaches, sometimes joined by the local instructional superintendent, visit all classrooms on a regular basis, looking for implementation of targeted practices. Teachers welcome these visits, and appreciate the feedback they receive. The walkthroughs and observations are also used to identify common areas for professional learning that can be addressed through subsequent professional development.

The principal is a respected instructional leader, manager, and change agent. Teachers express respect for her ability to delegate authority while at the same time maintaining a good understanding of what is going on in classrooms. Teachers sense that much is expected of them, but that leaders provide the support they need to be successful. The school runs especially smoothly. Transitions are well-managed. As a solution to behavioral problems previously associated with bathroom visits, classes now take bathroom breaks together. So as not to lose instructional time, some teachers read aloud or conduct other instructional activities with students who are waiting their turn.

The school has a number of productive partnerships with outside organizations including Teacher's College, which provides two staff developers, Fordham University, Chess in the Schools, the American Ballroom Theater, READ (which provides an after-school program for struggling first-grade students, and the Society of Educational Arts.

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.

Teachers and instructional leaders use a range of formal and informal assessments to monitor student progress toward year-end goals, as determined by the school's Comprehensive Education Plan, on a regular basis. The classroom assessment binders are used by the principal and assistant principal to ensure that teachers are focused on moving all students ahead academically. The results of interim assessments are reviewed in the grade-level and subject-area meetings described above and used to plan next steps.

Teachers are required to submit monthly reports on their students' independent reading levels to the administration. The pupil personnel and academic intervention services teams meet regularly to discuss and explore student data, and to monitor the progress of at-risk students.

Goal-setting through the Comprehensive Education Plan takes place largely on an annual basis. The school leadership team is actively involved in this process. Professional development sessions held each June are used to evaluate goals in literacy, mathematics, social studies, and science, and to map out curriculum for the year ahead.

Despite being aware of the State-mandated goals for student achievement, instructional leaders do not as yet set measurable interim goals for the aggregate progress of groups of students over time. As a result, there is no easy way to systematically track schoolwide progress toward these goals during the course of the year.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Port Morris School (PS 5)	∅	✓	+
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	