



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Public School 17  
778 Forest Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Robin Cohen**

**Dates of review: March 12 - 13, 2007**

**Reviewer: Louise Kapner**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 017, located in the south Bronx, is a twelve month multi-sited special education school for 330 students in kindergarten through grade 8. Fifty two percent of the students are identified as emotionally disturbed and/or cognitively delayed and 48% are students with autism. All students have been identified by the Committee on Special Education as needing intensive management and therapeutic services and differentiated instruction. PS 17 at PS 184 has 13 middle school classes for students with emotional and learning disabilities and five middle school classes, including one bilingual, for students with autism. PS 17 at PS 220 has six classes and PS 17 at PS 43 has 9 classes that serve only students with autism from kindergarten through grade 5. PS 17 at PS 161 has three classes, kindergarten through grade 5, for students with emotional and/or learning disabilities and seven classes for students with autism, and PS 17 at PS 125 has one inclusion class. Fifty five percent of the students are Hispanic, 41% Black, 2% Asian and 2% are White. Male students (88%) comprise the majority of the student population. Sixty students (19%) are English language learners. The classes are multi-graded and have a student to teacher to paraprofessional staffing ratio of 12:1:1, 8:1:1, or 6:1:1. Students participate in either standardized or alternate assessments. Approximately 4% of the students take alternate assessments.

This has been a year of transition for this school. A newly appointed principal joined the administrative team at the beginning of February. Additionally, there have been a number of changes to the school's organization including the transfer of additional classes from an off-site into the main site and an opening of a class mid-year at an off-site.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The newly appointed principal has a clear vision of moving the instructional program forward and is well supported by her assistant principals in this effort.
- The administrative team works collaboratively to support the goals of the school.
- Teachers, paraprofessionals and members of the school community are extremely supportive and respectful of each other and demonstrate a dedicated approach to working with fragile students.
- Review of data is on-going and used to support instructional needs.
- The school places a high priority on reducing incidences and implementing a school-wide behavior modification program.
- Parents are appreciative of the efforts of staff and are knowledgeable of school programs.
- Students know what is expected of them and are part of the decision making process.
- Technology is incorporated into the instructional program.
- Opportunities for professional development are provided to teachers with an emphasis on improving instruction.

### What the school needs to improve

- Provide for additional common meeting and planning time for teachers and paraprofessionals.
- Address scheduling to maximize teaching of the content areas.
- Create grading rubrics that are aligned with state standards to provide a uniform assessment tool of student performance.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

“Bridge to Success” is the overall motto of the school and the name of their behavior modification program. As one student stated, the administrators and staff encourage him “to do my best.” The principal and her three assistant principals show a true commitment to creating a safe environment where all students can learn and be respected. One teacher shared that the “growth of the school has been tremendous” and went on to highlight the resources available to support instruction and the improvement in the behavior of students. Classrooms reflect student learning and staff are actively engaged in meeting the needs of all students. A large area in the hallway at the main site has graphs showing the progress of students and classes towards attaining the highest level for behavior. The fragile population of autistic children is well attended to by a very dedicated staff that is always looking at ways to build successes into the students’ daily routine. The principal and her administrative team recognize the school’s strengths and areas that need to be further developed, which they are collaboratively addressing. Established systems are beginning to take hold but the impact on student achievement is not yet fully evident. PS 17 has a positive relationship with its host schools.

June 2006 saw 12% of their students graduate into less restrictive environments on the high school level. A goal this year is to increase this number.

#### **How well the school meets New York City’s evaluation criteria**

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The school uses available and school generated data to address instructional and behavioral needs of students. Data from the online occurrence reporting system and the school-wide information system identifies time, place, and type of reportable incident and enables monitoring of school, class, grade, and student specific issues. A review of the data supported a transfer for a student with a significantly high number of classroom referrals. Recent data shows a decrease in his reportable incidences. Students and classes earn points and achieve levels one through three in Bridge to Success. Classroom calendars record student points. Graphs displayed in the main hallway reflect each class’ level. Students and teachers can monitor and compare progress. Results from standardized and interim assessments, quizzes, conferencing notes, and individual education plan progress reports provide staff with information that supports grouping of students for instruction and monitors performance. Computer generated data for students in literacy programs such as Read 180 and Achieve 3000, and math assessments from the supplemental Math Skill Builder program, are reviewed on a regular basis to drive instruction. Administrators are working with teachers to make them more comfortable in accessing and learning how to go deeper into the data to differentiate instruction and to monitor student and class performance and progress. The school collects detailed data for students on the autistic program. The Brigance and data folios inform teachers of student performance. Additionally, the Applied Behavioral Analysis provides data related to a

student's mastery of skills. The assistant principal and English as a second language teacher analyze the New York State English as a second language achievement test data to identify and plan for instruction. The aforementioned data is disaggregated and reviewed for all sites. However, given the high proportion of minorities and males further review of data is recommended for these groups.

School's results from previous years' standardized tests and interim data from assessments are reviewed and used to identify areas for further examination and serve as a comparison to its own performance.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school's goals are to achieve instructional gains and reduce incidences. Reviewing data from Achieve 3000 the principal identified student time on task as not sufficient to support learning. Guidelines have been established to monitor student engagement and completion of literacy activities. This data along with results from Read 180 provides information for creating classroom environments that support instruction. Academic intervention services are provided during the day and after school. Materials of high interest and low vocabulary are used to engage students. Teachers of the autistic program use data from the Brigance and the individual education plan to set goals and design activities that maximize each student's potential and for them to become as independent as possible. Targeted behaviors are monitored thus informing next steps. School wide information system data is used to develop a comprehensive incident reduction plan. Progress summary charts identify specific actions with desired outcomes and provide an evaluation of the implementation and progress towards meeting goals. A review of data reflects a significant drop in referrals from September through December, a slight increase in January, and a decrease again beginning in February.

Administrators meet minimally weekly to review progress towards attaining school goals and plan appropriate next steps. Monthly faculty conferences are site based. As needed, staff attend meetings at alternate sites. While there is common time built into teachers' schedules at the main site regularly planned meetings do not take place. The school does not use this time optimally. On-going opportunities for teachers to share best practices, and discuss relevant issues, are not incorporated into the program. At an off site, planning time between teachers and paraprofessionals is not consistent. Designated time is needed as paraprofessionals are key support personnel.

High expectations for student achievement are evident. Classrooms have posted schedules reflecting daily and weekly activities, instructional rubrics focus students on steps for completing tasks, and point values for Bridge to Success are displayed. "I changed a lot...my teachers help me a lot when I'm doing something wrong", shared a student. Grading rubrics for the autistic students are available. The school does not have a uniform grading rubric that is aligned with standards for standardized assessment students. This is needed as the school moves forward to meet instructional goals. Parents are asked to sign their child's daily point sheet. Teachers in the autistic program send home a daily communication sheet which includes a section for parent responses. Meetings provide parents with information and materials for use at home. Parents are appreciative of everyone's efforts and see a "wonderful school."

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient with some well developed features.**

The school uses the mandated content area curriculum and follows units of study proposed by the district. A pacing calendar enables teachers to focus on spiraling instruction and ensures meeting curriculum guidelines. Computer based Read 180 and Achieve 3000, enables students to work at their own level and pace and self-monitor their responses. Data from these programs is used to inform grouping and plan for differentiated instruction. For students in the autistic program, Mayer Johnson picture symbols assist in acquiring effective communication skills which are used in the classroom. The Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children provides a structured methodology for creating classrooms that support smooth transitions and clear expectations. Kindergarten students were able to move into morning meeting using color coded prompts. The introduction of ‘iTeach/iLearn’ encourages the use of technology. Interactive whiteboards enable teachers to create exciting, engaging lessons and students work independently on laptops. A seventh grader finds his computer useful for research “...instead of having to go through a huge book and finding what you don’t want.” Students earn points for social and academic performance. Participating in clubs and teams, and shopping at the school store are rewards for attaining and maintaining a high level of aggregate points. Teachers are held accountable for designing tasks that are age and instructionally appropriate. Record books are maintained with student outcomes. A committee’s review of data was used to develop a language allocation policy and design student specific instruction for English language learners.

School goals drive decisions of budgeting, staffing and scheduling. Monies for classroom materials, professional development activities for teachers, staff positions and tangible rewards for positive behavior focus on instruction and reducing incidences. Scheduling reflects maximizing instructional time. However, middle school teachers are responsible for teaching all content areas in multi-graded classes. The school does not have supports in place to ensure that instruction is grade specific. The school needs to capitalize on teachers’ strengths to support grade appropriate instruction to improve student outcomes.

The school’s climate fosters respect for staff and students. Students are known by name and the administrators’ open-door policy gives students latitude to drop by to say hello. A daily tracking log of calls to absentees is maintained and students with 100% attendance are highlighted on a hallway bulletin board. Student attendance has shown a steady increase.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient with some well developed features.**

The stability and commitment of staff over the past two years has been a factor in creating a positive learning environment. Inter-site transfers and reassignments of teachers reflect careful thought on the part of administrators and have been effective. New York City Teaching Fellows, who comprise a majority of newer staff, appreciate the mentoring they receive. Teachers and paraprofessionals are afforded many opportunities to participate in

professional development. Coaches from different disciplines meet with staff to support the school's goals in improving instruction and reducing incidences. Training for data driven new initiatives is provided during the day, after school and on Saturdays and teachers are encouraged to sign up on-line for district courses. When appropriate, staff participates in inter-site activities and full day professional development brings all staff together. The principal, a former district mathematics supervisor, will be using her expertise to improve instruction.

The administration is highly visible and well respected. Administrators visit classrooms regularly and engage teachers and students in conversations around learning. Formal observations by the administration include an extensive post observation report that incorporates teaching, student engagement, assessments and classroom environment. Teachers appreciate the positive manner in which suggestions are offered. Checklists with uniform criteria for classroom environments enable teachers to self-evaluate and are used during classroom inter-visitations. Teachers are extremely supportive of each other and share strategies and best practices informally. However, team meetings are not consistently scheduled. Better use of common preparation periods is needed to support the school's efforts to improve instruction. Service providers support students and are part of the team approach. A Federally funded after school 21<sup>st</sup> Century Live and Learn Program at the main site provides additional instructional support for students and opportunities for them to be involved in peer mediation, thusly furthering the school's goals.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school's Comprehensive Education Plan is a working document that encompasses the programs from each of its sites and incorporates revisions as needed. Representatives of the school leadership team are part of this process.

School administration is constantly looking at where they are, where they want to go and how to get there. Behavioral and instructional data is used to create interim goals and identify areas that need further development. The recent incorporation of Applied Behavior Analysis into the autistic program is extremely supportive of instruction. The incident reduction plan is periodically reviewed and a summary chart focuses on the school's progress. School wide information system data supports this effort. Instructional materials and programs and student grouping to support differentiated instruction are challenges for next year. Navigator, a computer based mathematics program will be incorporated into the instructional program to support student learning. Departmentalized instruction will be grade and content specific. Using Columbia University's Teachers' College reading writing workshop model to move the literacy program forward is under consideration. A science laboratory is being established. PS 17 is focused on becoming a "Bridge to Success."

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Public School 17</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>	X		
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		X	

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	