



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Basheer Qusim School

Public School 53

**360 East 168 Street
New York
NY 10456**

Principal: Collin M. Wolfe

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Reviewer: Jill Berman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 53 is a neighborhood school located in the Morris Heights section of the Bronx. It has over 1400 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 5 of whom 88% are Title 1 eligible, which is above the average for similar schools. The school is structured into six mini-schools. Students in pre-kindergarten through grade 1 are divided into Dual Language and Inquiry Learning campuses that are housed in two portable buildings. The main building contains students in grades 2 through 5. Each mini-school is divided into three "cohort instructional clusters" based on the homogeneous grouping of students within that grade.

Sixty percent of the students are Hispanic, 37% are Black, and the remaining 3% come from other backgrounds. In recent years some of the newly arrived students are from French speaking countries. Over 27% of the students are classified as English language learners and 3% are special education students. The school's attendance rate was below similar schools, but improved to 90.5% in the past year.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides strong leadership and effectively communicates his vision.
- The principal works closely with his cabinet to monitor student achievement.
- The school uses baseline data well to drive instruction and relies on midline assessments to monitor student progress.
- At-risk students are carefully identified and given additional support both during and after the regular school day.
- Clear steps have been taken to provide greater time equity for reading, writing and mathematics to improve student achievement.
- The school provides a variety of instructional supports for teachers and teachers feel comfortable asking for help.
- Teachers on each grade make good use of a professional development block of 100 minutes each week to share strategies to improve achievement.
- The assistant principals for literacy and mathematics work closely with the coach and instructional specialists to provide coordinated instructional support for teachers.
- The school does a lot of parental outreach and involves parents in a range of activities.
- Students get regular feedback about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to provide staff training in strategies for differentiating instruction in order to address the range of students' needs more effectively.
- Continue to find ways to partner with non-English and non-Spanish speaking families concerning the achievement of their children.
- Continue to find ways to more fully motivate and engage students in grade 5.
- Continue to strengthen strategies to improve further the performance of English language learners and special education students.
- Continue efforts to improve the school's teacher retention rate.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Since his appointment to Public School 53, the principal has focused on improving student achievement by using data to drive instruction, closely monitoring progress and putting appropriate systems in place. The principal shows his commitment to distributive leadership by working closely with his cabinet to address instructional issues and develop appropriate strategies to build capacity within the staff. Teachers feel supported as a result of targeted professional development activities and are comfortable seeking help. Consequently, the gains as measured by City and State test results have been impressive for nearly all constituents and there is a sense that the school is moving in the right direction. The school self evaluation reflects the fact that the school is keenly aware of its strengths as well as the areas for improvement.

Parents are seen as vital partners in the effort to improve student performance and a number of programs such as literacy, mathematics, and parent–child reading workshops have been instituted. Parents are also encouraged to participate in English as a second language, high school equivalency and computer technology classes to develop their own skills, since strengthening family links is seen as another way to increase student achievement. The principal regularly informs parents of student progress in achieving annual goals.

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 effectively collects and analyzes a range of data to set goals and monitor progress for individuals as well as groups of students. To monitor on-going student performance securely and shape instruction, teachers regularly gather data from running records, benchmark writing folders, writers’ notebooks, and practice and diagnostic classroom tests along with information from State and City examinations. Since the school has a high number of students who are transient, the school keeps careful track of these groups along with other constituents. The principal believes that ‘the child is the parent of the adult’ and he makes tracking the progress of early childhood students another priority. The school also pays close attention to the progress being made by its higher achieving students in order to ensure that they are provided with challenging work. The school created an honor society to celebrate academic excellence and also recognizes the efforts of students who are improving.

Judgments about how well the school is doing to improve student achievement are based largely on comparisons with the school’s past performance and this measure is used effectively. The school ascribes the rising trend in student performance to its increased use of data. While data show that special education students and English language learners have also made some gains the school recognizes that more effective

interventions need to be developed and has already made key staff changes in both of these areas and is more rigorously monitoring Individual Education Plans. Given the recent changes, it is not yet clear what impact these interventions will have on student achievement. The school notes how its performance compares with that of similar schools. It is aware of the performance of different ethnic groups.

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 principal uses “data as a stimulant” to engage in professional discourse with members of the school community. Data are well utilized by school leaders and faculty to develop the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan which sets clear and measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement. The principal along with cabinet members (assistant principals, coaches, instructional specialists and Academic Intervention Services coordinator) view this plan as a living document and implement its goals and strategies systematically. The cabinet meets regularly to review progress towards reaching periodic benchmarks. To improve student performance among students with differing achievement levels, “Cohort Instructional Clusters” were created within each grade that enable students to be more homogeneously grouped. A Dual Language Campus for higher achieving students in kindergarten through grade 2 was reinstated to increase achievement levels for both English language learners and English proficient students.

Providing students who are in greatest need of improvement with supplementary support is a strength of the school. The school identifies students performing on levels 1 and 2 as well as those needing a small push to get to the next level and provides them with extra support such as in-school Academic Intervention Services, extended day, after-school, pre-school, Saturday and holiday programs. Academic Intervention staff work closely with teachers to coordinate their efforts. Special Education Teacher Support Services are also utilized effectively. These measures are having a positive impact on student performance and the school anticipates further improvements with the recent changes made.

The school effectively communicates goals for student achievement to parents and students. Parents feel the principal is readily accessible and that he ‘wants to do what’s right for each child’. The school has begun to take steps to engage newly-arrived families who speak neither English nor Spanish in order to share mutual concerns regarding the progress of their children. Strengthening the school-parent partnership has been a key in improving student achievement. The whole school community is committed to the school’s aspirations for the students.

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.

Curricula are appropriately selected based on their alignment with State standards. There has been an effective use of Project Arts programs in music, painting and dance to increase students’ language acquisition and improve their cognitive capacities. The use of

National Science Foundation materials in early childhood grades has resulted in improved achievement. Clear steps have been taken to provide greater time equity for reading, writing and mathematics to improve student achievement.

Teachers are accountable for improving student achievement and the principal and assistant principals regularly observe classes and monitor lesson plans to identify instructional practices that need support. Baseline data is used well to drive instruction. A number of teachers, however, still need assistance in differentiating instruction and school leaders realize that more training is required. Budgeting and staffing decisions are closely based upon the school's achievement goals. The principal was successful in getting regional approval for an additional assistant principal and lead teacher to implement improvement efforts. He also strengthened his support staff by adding two instructional specialists. In addition, he has moved key staff around to build a more effective team. The principal has made creative scheduling decisions such as establishing an extended weekly professional development block to improve classroom instruction and instituting an innovative schedule to provide more instructional time for mathematics. Improved student performance has been attributed to these measures.

Most students are actively engaged in instruction. They get regular feedback about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. The school recently implemented partial departmentalization for students in grade 5 to improve their motivation and achievement, although is too soon to ascertain the success of this change. In general, the staff know and respect students. When students have concerns they are listened to and action is taken.

Improving student and staff attendance have been priorities for the school. Both have increased in the past year because of the actions the school has taken, including positive reinforcement for good attendance.

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.

The school has had a high rate of teacher turnover, in part due to the large number of Teach for America staff employed. Although these teachers have high expectations for students and solid academic credentials, two qualities valued by the school, most leave after their two-year service is completed. Consequently, the principal has been actively seeking other sources for teachers and has found several who are well qualified in day care centers.

Professional development is a high priority. The school effectively uses assistant principals, coaches, instructional specialists and lead teachers to improve instructional practices and these measures have led to improved performance. The 100 minute per week professional development block provides an important structure for collaborative planning and skill development. Assistant principals offer 'lunch and learn' sessions that provide teachers with valuable materials at the start of new units. Teachers feel these supports are really helpful and are comfortable asking for assistance. Teachers are also enthusiastic about being able to learn from one another and a lot of informal sharing occurs. The principal is frequently in classrooms and has a secure awareness of the quality of instruction. The assistant principals regularly observe teachers and identify those who need assistance. The instructional support staff are responsible for initiating

assistance when necessary. Teachers participate in structured learning walks and are eager to implement the effective practices that they observe. Teacher support is appropriately differentiated according to the needs revealed during this monitoring process.

The principal has established clear systems and procedures to ensure that the school runs smoothly. The principal is highly respected by staff. Parents who have been involved with the school prior to his arrival feel that 'lots of changes and lots of progress' have taken place under his leadership. Actions to date reflect his strong capacity to secure further change.

Partnerships with outside organizations have been used very well to enhance achievement through, for example, after-school instructional and recreational programs. The school also works with groups to improve the health of students and their families. Community agencies help families with legal issues while arts partnerships provide good enrichment opportunities for the students.

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 principal is diligent about having his staff monitor the yearly measurable achievement goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan. The school examines the results of mid-year and end-year assessments along with a variety of soft data generated within classes to check progress within and across classrooms in meeting these goals. The principal and cabinet use these data to adjust plans and implement appropriate interventions. For example, the principal and cabinet rank classes on each grade as 'beginning', 'progressing' and 'consistent' based upon achievement data and provide extra support to those in the first two categories so target goals can be met.

The school's leadership is concerned that students from all subgroups reach expected targets. This year the school has been paying special attention to the progress of special education students and English language learners. An interim acting assistant principal now has the responsibility of closely supervising the Dual Language and English as a second language programs. Special education teachers have been trained in the Wilson program in an effort to boost achievement. Students needing extra help are carefully identified and receive additional support during the school day, and/or in one of the several programs available before or after-school.

The staff and parents have a clear sense of the school's yearly achievement goals and the principal and cabinet flexibly realign practices and resources based upon their review of data. For example, this year the school's Saturday academy has been rescheduled and will begin earlier in order to improve student achievement. End-line assessments are then used to guide the creation of the next year's performance goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Basheer Qusim School (PS 53)	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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	