



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The School of Higher Expectations

Community School 66

**1001 Jennings Street
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Marilyn E. Smith

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Reviewer: Charles Lupton

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School for Higher Expectations is a pre-kindergarten through 5th grade elementary school serving 536 students. It has just completed restructuring with the final 8th grade students graduating in summer 2006.

The ethnic mix of the school comprises 76.2% Hispanic, 23.3% Black and less than 1% Asian and other. The proportion of English language learners is 29% with the main language being Spanish. Special education students comprise 5% of the school population. The school contains bilingual and special education classes.

The school receives Title 1 funding with 85% eligibility which is higher than that in similar and City schools. The current attendance rate is 91%, which is in line with similar schools and just below that of City schools.

This is an empowerment school. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is highly respected and has the clear capacity to continue to drive the school forward.
- The 100 Book Challenge is very effective and has significantly increased the levels of interest in reading for students and their parents.
- The English language arts curriculum incorporates many additional components to underpin its effectiveness.
- The curriculum is designed well to provide a good range of qualitative and quantitative data.
- Staff consistently use a unified approach to lesson structure and a systemized approach to the collection of data, including well maintained student portfolios.
- Staff work very well together, supporting each other in planning and improving instruction.
- The school is very effective in seeking to ensure high attendance rates and rewarding success in this area.
- The attitudes and behavior of the students is very good, resulting in a calm, and orderly, environment that includes good displays of student work.
- Students enjoy coming to school, respect the teachers and, in turn, are respected.
- Professional learning and development is good and has a significant impact on school development.

Areas for Improvement

- Improve short and long term development planning by including objectively measurable, interim measures of success within agreed timeframes to assess the impact of plans and interventions.
- Further develop the use of data analysis to include more detailed comparison between classes, grades and identified groups of students.
- Continue to develop the use of data to address the needs of all students and increase active student engagement through differentiated instruction

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with well-developed features.

Under the leadership of the principal, the school has developed significantly into an establishment that is now orderly and with students who are engaged in their learning. This is of great credit to all the staff in the school who have worked hard to achieve this, although there is still more work to do.

Data is collected and analyzed to provide the school with an effective understanding of its performance and to plan for the present and the future. However, the data is not yet used as effectively to monitor the success of its plans or to inform differentiation in the classrooms. The school is aware of this. As an empowerment school, the school is currently engaged in a research project to use additional assessment materials to increase its understanding of the performance and progress of students.

Very effective professional development is in place to support the school goals and to improve teacher performance and instruction. This is targeted well through good class observations by the principal and assistant principal with intervention from the mathematics consultants and literacy coaches.

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.

Through the combination of available and school-generated qualitative and quantitative data, the school gains a very good understanding of the performance and progress of the students on an individual basis as well as by class and grade. Through conferencing, this data is continuously updated by teachers in a consistent manner. In addition to State tests, the school utilizes a range of diagnostic tests that are used effectively to inform student progress and instructional needs.

The academic intervention team, family support team and the bilingual and special education teachers use data effectively to track the progress of English language learners and special education students. Progress is monitored and students are moved out of intervention services when data demonstrates that the students are able to join general education classes. Students identified as at risk, either academically or socially, are identified and carefully supported and monitored. For example, students at level 1 and 2 are identified and attend three, fifty-minute extended day classes during the week. In addition, the school has identified many flexible groupings that are supported to achieve well. For example, higher achieving readers take part in the effective 'hooked on books' program. The school is less effective in comparing its performance in relation to ethnicity, gender and the on-going relative progress made in subjects other than English language arts and mathematics.

The school uses the data well to understand its progress relative to its own past performance and that of local and similar schools. The principal uses this information to identify other schools that may be in a position to conference with. While the school does compare performance across grades, classes and other student groups, it does not routinely use the data to identify the reasons for any differences.

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

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The school has clear plans to address the needs of all its students. This includes planning for individual students, classes and grades and for the professional learning of the teachers to improve instruction throughout the school. As a result, the school has steadily improved its performance since restructuring. As improved instruction is the cornerstone of its planning, this is relevant to all classes and therefore includes particular focus on special education students, bilingual students and those who are at risk of lower academic success.

The school has high expectations of its students and through good conferencing and feedback on work, the students have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve the quality of their learning. The school has a variety of reward schemes that are used creatively to underpin these high expectations. For example, the school has introduced the highly effective 100 Book Challenge in which all students are actively encouraged by the principal and teachers to read, for pleasure, on a daily basis, both at home and at school. Each assembly reinforces this as do medals and certificates. This scheme is very popular with the students and the parents who have seen a significant increase in the number of books that students’ read and their levels of confidence.

One goal identified in the principal’s performance review is for teachers to become part of leadership teams that help to drive instruction and make decisions about next learning steps. This is indicative of the whole school drive to improve student performance. While school goals and plans are clearly focused on short and long term improvement, timelines and objectively measurable targets are not used to monitor the progress of the planning.

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 follows the mandated curriculum and supplements this very effectively with a wide range of additional components to improve instruction and to provide quantitative data to inform classes. This is particularly the case for English language arts. Teachers use data well to decide on student groupings within their classes and to design instruction to meet the needs of the class, resulting in all students being engaged in their work. Through one-to-one work, teacher and para-professional input and differing expectation, there are elements of differentiated instruction in place. However, this is not common to all classes and does not provide a range of tailored work for the students that would engage the students more actively.

Much teaching is well planned and there are very good resources available to support learning. Clear, helpful process charts and rubrics support instruction, student work is well displayed and there is good consistency of instructional practice across the school. This results in a continuum of experience for students as they progress through the school and when taught by cluster teachers.

Through discussion, observation and data analysis, teachers are held accountable. All staff know the students very well, both academically and socially and are very good at responding to individual needs. This cements the strong relationships and ensures that the students behave very well. Students respect and trust all members of staff and know they can go to them for any support they need. In conjunction with the principal, the parent coordinator is very effective in addressing the needs of parents in supporting their children through targeted workshops. For example, each month, the school runs parent workshops on elements of English language arts, mathematics and a social issue such as health awareness.

Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are very effective and are made to enhance the school. For example, through budgetary choice, data showed that achievement in English language arts needed to be improved and this resulted in the school adopting the 100 Book Challenge which was expensive. It also required class scheduling to incorporate an additional fifty minute session each day with two members of staff present in each class. This is indicative of the drive for improvement by all members of staff as the deans, cluster teachers and coaches are utilized in this manner. The principal has plans to increase the involvement to include the office staff.

Good attendance is seen as fundamental to the school because if students do not attend, they cannot learn. To address this, the school has a wide variety of measures in place including reward systems. In addition, attendance is a daily subject in assemblies and there is a prominent bulletin board showing daily attendance by grade.

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.

When hiring new teachers, the principal looks for people who work hard and are committed to the school and its values. The teachers have to be 'fit for us'. This includes the ability to work with small groups. The principal is clear about the role of data within the school and is currently devising ways to incorporate this into the interview procedures. However, since her appointment, the principal has had few opportunities to hire new teachers so these new ideas have not yet been realized in practice.

The principal prefers to view professional development as continuous learning. With the administration team and coaches, the school has developed a thorough and very effective program of professional learning. This supports the school plans as well as developing the individual teachers and support staff whose needs are identified through surveys and personal discussion. This is resulting in effective staff development and improvements in instruction in each class. For example, the use of data is explained and then reinforced through direct modeling from the principal during grade meetings. Consequently, staff are using data with better understanding and in an increasingly informative way.

Lessons are observed frequently both formally and informally. Constructive verbal and written feedback is given following each observation that is designed to move staff forward. For

example, as a result of observation, staff may receive professional learning or are encouraged to observe good practice in other classrooms. This has resulted in increasing the number of inter-visitations and is building increasingly reflective practice. The staff work well together in grade teams and there are regular inter-grade meetings for the grade leaders.

The principal is highly respected. With a variety of specific teams, she has worked very effectively to bring about positive change in the school that is very well placed to continue. For example, the school is now very orderly resulting in an environment that is suited to good instruction.

The school is supported by a wide variety of outside agencies and support services that enhance academic achievement and student welfare very well. For example, the school links with the Bronx Zoo to develop interactive learning at the school and at the zoo. The Teachers' College is integral to the school in developing instruction. After school care and homework support is provided by a 21st Century program called PHIPPS.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal's performance review, which contains complementary goals, are well considered documents. Both are referred to throughout the year to support school development. They clarify the goals of the school that are firmly based upon continuous school improvement. Although the plans contain some measures of success, they do not contain interim, data-led diagnostic assessments to determine the success of the plans. As a result, the school is not in a position to quantify accurately the impact of the plans during the year as effectively as it could.

However, through the use of qualitative data, the school is aware when plans are not working as effectively as they might. This has resulted in plans being constructively altered during the year. For example, plans to increase parental involvement in the school were not having sufficient impact, leading to a revision of strategy and the introduction of multi-cultural lunches.

The school is very effective in building plans successively, with one plan developing into the next in a flexible way. For example, although differentiation was a focus for development this year, the school has identified that further development is required and is currently incorporating new strategies into the plans it is formulating for next year.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The School of Higher Expectations (PS 66)	∅	✓	+
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	