



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Community Elementary School 73

**1020 Anderson Avenue
Bronx
NY 10452**

Principal: Mary Simone

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Reviewer: Peter Lewis

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Community Elementary School 73 is located in the southern part of the Bronx and provides an education for nearly 840 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Attendance rates are below City and similar school average at just over 90%, having remained broadly static over time. The majority of students are Hispanic and, at just under 70%, this is much higher than both similar and City schools. Most of the remaining students are Black, (27%) with very small proportions of White and Asian students. At just over 9%, the number of special education students has increased to above City and similar levels and, at 28%, the proportion of students who are English language learners is higher than both City and similar schools. The school is Title 1 eligible for 93% of students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has ensured the rapid development of the school, in particular in establishing a strong climate in which learning can flourish.
- Assistant principals and other staff in leadership positions fully support the school's vision and provide positive support for teachers.
- Organizational structures are firmly integrated so that the school runs smoothly.
- There is a strong sense of teamwork and collegiality which reflects the school's ethos of mutual respect.
- Data is used increasingly well in helping teachers to plan interesting and challenging lessons.
- The great majority of students are courteous and well motivated.
- Attendance is improving because of the good systems that have been established and which are consistently applied.
- Parents and teachers describe significant improvements in tone, safety and appearance of the school since the principal's appointment.
- Parents celebrate the degree to which students, particularly those experiencing difficulties, are supported.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that data is collected and organized in such a way as to show the progress made by different groups.
- Use data more precisely in setting targets for students which reflect their different starting points.
- Refine whole school improvement planning so that it includes clear and specific goals and tracks progress towards their achievement through each year.
- Focus the monitoring of lessons more precisely on what students have learned rather than what teachers have done.
- Ensure greater consistency in the degree to which teachers plan lessons across subjects that fully challenge students of all abilities.
- Review curriculum planning to identify specific points in which skills learned in English and mathematics can be applied to learning in other subjects.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Although the school is proficient overall, there are a number of strengths in its work that demonstrate a clear capacity for further improvement. At the same time, the school has moved rapidly in developing its understanding and use of student achievement data. Considerable improvement has been achieved over a short period of time as a result of the principal's strong focus on securing the best for her students. This is a view that is strongly shared by assistant principals and coaches and, as a result, relationships and teamwork throughout the school are good. Because of this, staff work together within a shared vision of what can be achieved. The high expectations modeled by the principal are increasingly evident in teachers' day to day practice.

Planning for school improvement is comprehensive but, at present, lacks sufficient detail to enable the school to track its progress sufficiently. The principal and assistant principals are regularly involved in monitoring instruction. Their discussion with coaches ensures that information and the interpretation of data analyses and observations are passed to teachers. The curriculum has been developed so that it both aligns with local and State requirements and provides a good range of stimulating activities which increasingly engage students and so accelerate their learning.

Consistency is being established in the degree to which teachers plan lessons that challenge all students. Coaches are instrumental in promoting this initiative. At present, the best lessons enthuse students and give them confidence in what they can achieve. In contrast, where planning is less imaginative and activities less stimulating, students are often disengaged.

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 gathers and analyzes a good range of data in order to understand its students' performance. Students in the greatest need of improvement or who are experiencing difficulties are well supported as the school makes good use of data to help it understand where they are learning well, and what needs to be done to accelerate this further. Data folios are now established in classes. They are comprehensive and well-ordered and have helped in strengthening and informing the school's understanding of student achievement using interim testing and conference notes.

Across grades and classes, information about each student's performance in reading, writing and mathematics is clearly set out and is updated regularly so that interventions can be accurately planned. This information is effectively used in, for example, developing a clear picture of aspects of students' learning that are more or less successful, and in developing strategies to ensure that any comparatively weaker areas are addressed. This works well in identifying specific questions that have not been answered accurately. A

good start has been made in extending analysis to illuminate the progress made across grades and classes. In contrast, the school's assessment of students' comparative performance year on year and across subjects is less refined. Comparisons of the achievement of each grade are made each year to look at past performance. However, this compares different groups of students with each other. The school does not currently track the performance of each specific group of students across each grade as they progress over time. In a similar way, less emphasis is placed on tracking the achievement of higher attaining students.

While the school has identified differences in the performance of students of different ethnicities, it acknowledges that full use of this information in planning appropriate interventions has not yet been made. Comparisons with the performance of other similar schools are made proficiently.

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.

Since the principal was appointed five years ago, considerable progress has been made in collecting data, and in using it to set and track goals for students and in identifying aspects of the school's work that require improvement. Goals for overall student achievement are set, although the improvements that are identified are not derived from projections of individual student gains. The principal works well in collaboration with assistant principals, coaches and teachers in evaluating the school's work and in planning for improvement, so that all are increasingly involved in identifying success and in agreeing about which areas require improvement.

Interim assessments are established, reinforcing the recently introduced mid-year reviews, and the data that results is used effectively in identifying aspects of the curriculum that need to be taught in a different way. This is particularly successful with students who have identified learning difficulties, whose progress is tracked carefully. At the same time, the placement of lead teachers in the bilingual classes ensures accurate analysis of the progress made by these students.

The principal has very high expectations of what students will achieve and of how they will be supported by teachers. In this she is well supported by senior staff and, as a group, they have achieved a great deal in communicating this vision to the staff. Although some students have an understanding of their goals, this is not yet consistently applied across classes, subjects or grades. Parents feel included in the school's work and well informed about the progress that their children have made. A good start has been made in using student assessment information in identifying whole school areas for improvement, such as in the development of strategies of differentiated instruction, although the absence of clear interim 'check points' makes it difficult for the school to identify the progress that is being made toward achieving its goals.

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.

The curriculum has been revised in line with requirements for English language arts and mathematics. Scheduling and staffing decisions are now increasingly driven by needs as identified by assessment data. A good example of this is the identification and placement of lead teachers in testing grades and in the English as a second language classes. Improving attendance further has a high profile and its data is monitored carefully. Decisions about scheduling, such as the move to ensure better equality of opportunity for students who are pulled out of class for intensive instruction, or the best use of the budget, are carefully taken in relation to identified improvements. The school is helped in this by the very high level of concern that all staff demonstrate towards their students. Strong and caring relationships are the norm and, as a result, students feel safe and know that the adults in the school are there should help be needed.

A good start has been made in using a range of data to build teachers' accountability. The 'class at a glance' sheets provide accurate and regularly updated information about student progress and are used, in discussion with senior staff, to identify needs and set action plans for students. Although the system is comparatively new, teachers have taken it on board well and are becoming more confident in using the information to plan instruction.

This is further reinforced by the data portfolios that have been established in all classes. Teachers differentiate their instruction well through guided reading, in which the range of grouping and the use of 'just right' books engage students and has a positive impact on their learning. Senior staff and coaches are capitalizing on this success through initiating a similar process in guided mathematics, while recognizing that more needs to be done to ensure that activities in all lessons are planned according to students' different needs. There are good examples of teachers' work involving students in their own learning through self assessment, such as the mathematics rubrics established in a 2nd grade class which guide students in assessing whether they've "got it", "think they understand" or "don't understand". This very good practice engages students well and the school is working to extend this, and students' ability to make use of it, further.

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 hiring and allocation of staff demonstrates the principal's very high expectations and understanding of teachers' strengths in deciding where their skills can best be utilized. Leaders and staff place great importance on making the best use of a range of professional development. This is well planned to address needs that have been revealed by the analysis of student data. The plan to develop teachers' skills in differentiating instruction, for example, is supported by training in assessment, such as in mathematics and in reading, and in making use of the data portfolios that have been established.

The principal is well supported by the assistant principals in the range of observations which inform this understanding, and discussion with the school's able and committed coaches leads to a good range of information being used in guiding whole-school

decisions and grade meetings. As a result, while planning for whole school improvement lacks detail, the school's understanding of its effectiveness is increasingly derived from monitoring activities, and the involvement of coaches allows classroom interventions and teachers' development to be planned and targeted appropriately. The school is aware that observations and walkthroughs are, at present, too focused on what teachers do, rather than what students are learning. Teachers value the support provided by the principal and coaches, and describe the degree to which opportunities to observe each others' practice within and across grades is beginning to establish a shared understanding of practice. A good atmosphere of professional respect has been established and is successful in securing improvement. Partnerships with external and community organizations, such as Highbridge, add to students' experiences and their learning. Teachers acknowledge the clear systems that have been put in place so that the school runs smoothly.

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 undeveloped

The school has improved considerably in its ability to analyze its performance and use this information in planning for improvement since the principal's appointment in September 2002. Interim testing gives the school a good sense of the students who are going to reach the targets that are set, and of where extra work is needed, although the way in which this information is organized is not as clear as it might be. The school has ensured that its planning for improvement is both comprehensive and that it makes increasingly good use of the established range of assessment data in identifying areas which require improvement. However, these do not yet include interim targets which will help in assessing the rate of progress made towards meeting planned objectives and this hampers the school in identifying both the rate of improvement and in modifying actions, should this be appropriate. Senior staff and coaches work well with teachers in helping them to interpret data, and to use this information in their planning and this level of support is steadily increasing teachers' confidence in moving their focus more towards what has been learned rather than what has been taught.

The principal and other senior staff have a very good understanding of the standards reached by students across the school, within and across grades. This information has been used effectively in ensuring a closer match between the curriculum, instruction and students' needs.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Community Elementary School 73	∅	✓	+
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		