



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Anne Hutchinson School

Public School 78

**1400 Needham Avenue
Bronx
NY 10469**

Principal: Mrs. Claudina Skerritt

Dates of review: October 24 – 26, 2006

Reviewer: John Messer

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

This large elementary school serves 862 students: 75% Black, 17% Hispanic and a small proportion of other ethnic groups. Nearly 12% are special education students and 5% are English language learners. The proportion of new immigrants is above average for City and even similar schools. One significant factor that affects the school's performance and student achievement is the high mobility rate. Large numbers of students enter and leave the school, due to open enrollment under NCLB, relocation to other communities and or states and temporary housing. This transient school population has a marked impact on the school's test results. The school is Title 1 eligible. Many students arrive in school with poorly developed language and communication skills. Consequently the school's most pressing priority is the development of speaking, reading and writing skills.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for improvement and has been highly successful in building capacity and organizing the school so that it is in a good position to raise achievement.
- Excellent on-going daily records of students' progress are kept by teachers in English language arts and mathematics.
- Records are used well to focus on the needs of each individual student and to adjust teaching to meet those needs.
- Teachers are very willing to do their best to improve their practice and welcome opportunities for professional development.
- Students are well behaved, eager to succeed and willing to please.
- Teachers plan together collaboratively and promote open avenues of communication.
- Academic intervention services are used effectively to boost the performance of students who are most in need of extra support.
- The school creates a data-rich annual Comprehensive Education Plan that provides an effective management tool and is used effectively to direct resources to areas of greatest need.
- The school cabinet monitors the work of the school closely and uses data effectively to evaluate progress and the success of support programs.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the consistency in the quality of instruction by raising expectations of students' performance.
- Set individual goals for students that give them a clear understanding of what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning.
- Raise the performance levels all students, including special education students, in English language arts, and continue to help 5th grade students make progress in mathematics.
- Engage parents more fully as partners in their children's education.
- Create more opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice in order to see clearly how they can improve.
- Involve students in self-assessment of their work by reference to clear rubrics that help them to evaluate their performance.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with some well developed features.

The school has adopted many strategies designed to improve standards, especially in English language arts. The school is very good at collecting data on student's performance and at analyzing it to identify strengths and weaknesses. The school's results do not show a steady increase from year to year. This is partly because different grades have different characteristics with a different mix of English language learners, special education students and those who have not been in the school for very long. It is also because there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. This contributes to inconsistencies in students' learning and an erratic pattern of results. There is still a way to go before the school's results in English language arts compare favorably with the average for similar schools but the principal has maneuvered the school into a good position to raise standards. The school has an energy and vibrancy that is underpinned by a sense of urgency to accelerate students' learning. It is continually examining its performance and revisiting goals in its quest to improve the quality of education it provides.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

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

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

There is some excellent practice in the school. Each teacher keeps detailed records. Teachers have become good at filling in 'Focus Sheets' that record student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. During daily lessons teachers fill in these sheets and note who exceeds, who meets and who does not meet the standards set. This builds up a profile of each student's progress and the profiles are used well by teachers and supervisors to identify those at risk of slipping back and those who are capable of achieving more. Analysis of teachers' records often reveals some inconsistencies between classes so the principal or supervisors hold discussions with teachers to determine how such inconsistencies can be resolved.

The school keeps careful records of test and assessment results for each grade. The cabinet analyses the school's test results and examines them to find out if there are any significant patterns or trends. It is clear from examining the school's data and comparing it with similar schools that achievement in English language arts is low. The school uses data effectively to gain an understanding of the performance and progress of different grades and classes, and investigates inconsistencies in results between different classes.

Similar analyses are conducted to determine whether English language learners, special education students and differing ethnic groups are making enough progress. However, the school has not analyzed data to see if there are any significant differences between the progress of students who remain in the school from kindergarten to 5th grade

compared with those who have joined the school after kindergarten. Such an analysis would make clear whether there is a need for extra support for new students when they join the school. The school however has a screening process for new admits, which enables them to provide targeted interventions based on the needs of the students. The school analyzes its annual school report carefully and compares its performance with that of similar schools. The information is used to determine where it is doing comparatively well and where it needs to improve.

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 and staff collaborate to determine how they might reach the end-of-year target for each grade in English language arts, mathematics and science. The principal has high expectations, so goals are demanding. Instructional leaders use data on student achievement to calculate how much progress might reasonably be expected in each class and whether this will achieve the class goal and aggregate to the overall grade goal. Interim assessments are made and as a result children are re-grouped and instructional activity is revised. Examination of data often reveals that some extra professional development is required to support teachers in pursuing their goals. This was the case in plans to reverse the negative trend in 5th grade students’ achievement in mathematics. The school leadership team, half of whom are staff and half parents, are continually revisiting school goals as they strive to accelerate students’ learning.

The teachers develop a good understanding of the results that they are expected to achieve with their students. However, the school’s high expectations are not always conveyed clearly enough to students and parents.

Teachers mark pupils’ work and discuss work with students so that they gain an understanding of how they should improve it. However, students do not have a set of specific short-term goals that show them exactly what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning and to progress, for example, from level 3 to level 4. Also students do not always have clear rubrics that help them evaluate their work. Consequently opportunities are missed to encourage students to take more responsibility for their own learning.

The school has found it difficult to engage parents in the learning partnership between home and school. This is a key barrier to accelerating students’ performance. Goals and improvement plans help leaders and staff to improve students’ performance. The next step is to involve students more closely in their learning and to redouble efforts to involve their parents as well.

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 well developed features.

Each year the school mounts an extensive needs-assessment exercise. This includes surveys of parents and staff to gain an understanding of their perceptions about how the school might be improved. Staff are asked what they think they need to develop to make them better teachers. A structured performance review is used to make sure that all relevant data is collected, including the results of tests and assessments. Curriculum maps have been created for all grades and from these flow unit plans to guide lesson planning. These are reviewed as part of the needs assessment. All the information gathered is used as a basis for creating the new annual Comprehensive Education Plan that includes specific action plans for each area of the curriculum, clear goals for improvement and time frames for achieving them. The plans provide the school with a sharply focused management tool that helps to align instruction and resources in accelerating learning for each student.

The school's plans also identify who is responsible for ensuring the plan's success. This builds in a chain of accountability. Plans also include information about exactly how each action will be funded. Time is allocated in response to the needs of each subject. English language arts receives a significantly greater allocation of time than mathematics, for example, and staff are deployed to support particular classes where data reveals that students are not making as much progress as they should. Scheduling and staff deployment are used flexibly so that they can be adjusted according to need. Smaller teaching groups in 5th grade mathematics lessons have been organized in an effort to improve progress.

There is a strong emphasis on maintaining good attendance. Parents are telephoned if their children are absent. The attendance committee meets regularly to deal with attendance and analyze data to see if there is any pattern of absence among individuals or classes that needs investigating. Students enjoy coming to school because they like learning and have good relationships with their teachers. Instructional programs engage their interest, particularly when teachers plan challenging work to meet the needs of all students. This promotes good attendance throughout the school.

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 principal is continuously striving to build and align capacity. She is highly respected and has good capacity to effect change. Routines are well established and procedures are explicit and are generally followed. Through discussions and frequent classroom visits by senior staff, the school has developed a good understanding of each teacher's particular strengths and areas for development. This information is used effectively to groom teachers for taking on particular responsibilities and to make best use of their talents. Teachers with high expectations of performance and those that show aptitude for using data to improve performance and progress are particularly valued. The school fully recognises that there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. This is mainly due to variations in teachers' expectations of students' performance. Where expectations are high students make good progress but, where teachers fail to expect enough, students' progress deteriorates. This is the main barrier to attaining higher standards.

' Feedback Sheets ' are created from data gathered during focused walkthroughs of all classes in a grade or across the school. Together with data on students' performance,

these feedback sheets build a clear picture of professional development needs. The school organizes training to meet these needs. The school has identified a weakness in teachers' capacity to stand back and reflect on their practice in order to sharpen their understanding of how they might best improve the quality of their teaching. The school has also recognised the need to improve teachers' conferencing skills. To resolve this, lunchtime training sessions have been held for all teachers in a particular grade. During these well-organized sessions teachers acknowledge their own learning needs and communicate openly and honestly in a joint team effort to improve practices. This candid self-evaluation is typical of the teachers' commitment to improve performance.

Academic intervention services are used effectively to boost performance of students who are most in need of extra support. There is eager competition for places in the popular after-school sessions designed to boost students' performance in English and mathematics and a program to prepare students and help them to do well in tests is run on Saturdays. All such initiatives support the school's efforts to reach its 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 has good structures for evaluating each student's performance throughout the year. Identification of particular needs starts with the class teachers who assess each student's achievement in reading, writing and mathematics at the beginning of the school year. In October, progress reports on each student are analyzed to identify those students who are not making enough progress to meet the required standards. Classroom teachers discuss students' progress with as many parents as they can. They set goals and adjust groupings to match instruction to students' particular stages of development. Those who are at risk of academic failure are targeted for extra intervention. The class focus sheets are then used to check on students' progress bi-weekly throughout the year and to see if the class is on course to meet its goals.

The cabinet is good at monitoring the school's overall performance by collecting data from teachers' records to determine whether the school is on track to achieve its goals. The school has built in flexibility to react rapidly if data reveals that individuals, classes or grades are making insufficient progress. Action plans are reviewed frequently as another check. Plans are adjusted according to the cabinet's identification of a specific need, such as accelerating 5th grade students' progress in mathematics.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

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| SCHOOL NAME: Anne Hutchinson School PS 78 | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| Quality Score | | X | |

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| 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.

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| 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 | |

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| 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 | |