



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Sidney Silverstein Little Sparrow School**

**PS 88**

**1340 Sheridan Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Melinda Hyer**

**Dates of review: May 24, 2007**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

PS 88, The Sidney Silverstein Little Sparrow School, is a kindergarten through grade 3 Empowerment School, with a student enrollment of 310. The school has been led by the current principal for two and a half years.

The students come from two ethnic groups: 42% Black and 58% Hispanic. Special education students account for 18% of the student population and have their needs addressed in general education classes. English language learners represent one third of the school population and are taught in general education classes with additional adult support. Student attendance, at 95%, is above that of both similar schools and City schools and is very high for students of such a young age. The school is Title 1 eligible with 85% of students qualifying which is higher than similar schools and the City average.

Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. They 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 developing a genuinely collaborative approach to decision making.
- There is strong instructional leadership in the school.
- The principal encourages a thoughtfully strategic approach to school improvement planning.
- The school is making increasingly effective use of classroom data and periodic assessments to inform the development of the curriculum and instruction.
- The whole staff is committed to achieving the school's mission and to doing their best for all students.
- The learning environment is enhanced by displays that celebrate students' learning and promote active engagement and understanding.
- The professional development program is effectively targeted at individual and whole school needs.
- There is a good range of intervention strategies that are tailored to meet the needs of those students in greatest need of improvement.
- Students enjoy coming to school, trust their teachers, feel safe, and are well supported.
- The school has developed a range of partnerships and programs to broaden students' learning experiences.

### What the school needs to improve

- Sharpen goal setting by establishing specific targets, with regular checkpoints, in order to measure progress, to realign the curriculum and instruction and to reassign resources in a timely fashion.
- Build on the analysis of data to identify those student subgroups where there is under performance.
- Make better and more consistent use of all available data to group students in the classroom and to provide them with the right level of challenge.
- Break down students' goals into small, achievable steps, share these with students and parents, and provide regular feedback about progress.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation are tightly aligned to school goals.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal skillfully engenders high expectations within the whole school community. She provides clear direction for the school through a thoughtful approach to goal setting. Emphasis is placed on modeling best practice and on disseminating effective instructional strategies to enhance student learning. The school's vision is underpinned by the commitment of all members of the school community to support students to achieve their best work. A purposeful culture has been established whereby decisions, guided by student data, are closely analyzed and lead to actions that impact positively on raising achievement for most students. The use of interim assessments and the analysis of student performance data are developing well and increasingly drive instruction.

The school is a learning community that personalizes the learning opportunities it provides for its students. Professional development is effective and is clearly focused on raising student achievement. Under the principal's guidance, the instructional leadership team monitors and evaluates the quality of teaching to enhance students' learning. However, this is not always aligned with the school's goals and the Comprehensive Education Plan does not drive school improvement.

### 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 consistent use of data and implementation of periodic assessments are priorities for the school. The principal has made sure that teachers recognize the importance of collecting, analyzing and using reliable data to accelerate the learning of students in the early grades. Benchmark assessments are used to develop strategies for maximizing student performance in mathematics, reading and writing. Teachers make good use of diagnostic assessments to teach specific skills where gaps have been identified in students' learning and to consolidate new learning. Teachers also use unit tests, quizzes and interim assessments to monitor the progress students make in other subjects.

Samples of students' assessed work are calibrated to ensure that teachers' marking and tracking of student progress are aligned to the State standards and expected levels of proficiency. The school administration regularly reviews whole school data to track the progress of students. Comparisons are made with similar schools and disseminated to the staff as applicable at grade level and by subject area. However, data generated by the school is not comprehensively disaggregated to better inform the analysis of student performance specifically by gender and ethnicity.

The introduction of new technology in the assessment of literacy has set new challenges for the school administration. However, teachers are now administering and using the data gathered more effectively. The school administration monitors whole school student attendance and the progress of English language learners and special education students

well. The information gathered informs intervention strategies and, where necessary, academic intervention services. However, the principal has identified the need for greater detail and improved collation of information on student progress to better inform strategy meetings and in aligning intervention programs more effectively.

**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 encourages a thoughtful and strategic approach to planning at individual, class and grade level which is clearly driven by data. Whole school goals are targeted towards building the school’s learning community, raising student achievement and promoting parent involvement. The school administration meets weekly to ensure regular updates on students’ academic progress, as well as their behavior and attendance. There are weekly collaborative meetings for teachers focused on sharing information about their students’ academic performance and linked to building instructional strategies. If concerns arise, there is quick follow up by the academic intervention team to collate data, meet with teachers and, where necessary, to implement appropriate support. Additionally, the school provides good support and challenge for high achievers.

The school has developed a good range of intervention strategies and support that is tailored to meet the needs of those students in greatest need of improvement. This includes push-in classroom support, after school academic programs and counseling. Consequently, most students targeted for intervention make good progress. The school is building its data base to create student performance profiles. There is, however, inconsistency in the quality of the goals set for individual students. These are not always clearly measurable and broken down into small, achievable steps to better communicate to students and parents what needs to be achieved and precisely what needs to be done.

There is a whole school culture of high expectations and commitment from all members of the school community to raise student achievement. The principal leads by example and provides clear direction for the improvement of the school. There is good communication and sharing of information. For example, there are parent workshops focused on the curriculum standards and how to improve children’s reading. Through regular reporting, teachers raise parents’ awareness of their expectations for student performance and how students can improve. The school is also responsive to the outcomes of parent surveys to incorporate their views in 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 proficient.**

The school has created a stimulating learning environment through a standards-based curriculum that offers rich and challenging programs that actively engage students in learning. The school hallways and classrooms are rich learning environments with displays that celebrate students’ learning and promote active engagement and understanding. The school is in the process of reviewing the goals set out in the

Comprehensive Education Plan to match key priorities. These steps are intent on making a positive impact on realigning the curriculum, reviewing instructional strategies, and reassigning resources accordingly. This is exemplified by improving the sharing of student data between grade levels and increasing staff collaborative meeting times.

Staff members are committed to achieving the school's mission and to doing their best for all students. Teachers are held accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan 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. Teachers effectively use English language rubrics which inform teachers' own assessment and is beginning to positively impact on their planning and conferencing with students. There is not yet consistency, however, in the way that teachers provide students with just the right level of challenge based on their academic and developmental needs.

Budgetary decisions, staff appointments and deployment, and scheduling are based on what data reveals. The curriculum is well resourced, with well-stocked materials and textbooks that align to the school's goals. For example, thought has been given to the programs and resources to accelerate the progress of those students who perform below proficiency level.

Students appreciate the fact that staff know and support them well. They also know who they can turn to if they have a problem. They love coming to school, work hard, behave well, and are proud of their school. There is mutual respect with both adults and students stating that they feel valued in the school. Most students set high expectations for themselves and what they can achieve. Many parents are active in the life of the school and in supporting their children's learning. Positive attitudes lead to high levels of attendance, but the school is also vigilant in following up any patterns of absence that cause concern.

**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.**

The principal describes herself as 'leading from behind' which is evident in the school's strong instructional leadership. She has empowered and built the capacity of the lead teachers and coaches who are directly involved in professional development, model best teaching practice and attend grade level and subject area meetings to sharpen their focus on the use of data in evaluating the impact of instruction.

The principal is respected for her clear focus on raising student achievement while being supportive to her staff. Her good communication skills are identified by staff and parents alike and she is recognized for implementing the changes needed for the school to improve further. The school runs smoothly because clear procedures are effectively communicated to all members of the school community. The principal is developing a genuinely collaborative approach to decision making which is underpinned by regular formal and informal lesson observations. However, these monitoring and evaluation processes are not tightly aligned to school goals to give greater depth to observations and to ensure that the related feedback better informs instructional practice.

Professional development is seen as the key to raising achievement. The school has developed programs clearly linked to whole-school priorities but also provides good levels

of differentiated activities for teachers at different stages of their career. The school targets the professional development needs of inexperienced teachers first, in addition to the focused induction program for new teachers. Teachers are encouraged to observe each other and to discuss their observations openly. The impact of professional development activities are evaluated and there has been clear impact in teachers' use and understanding of recording performance data, in developing student portfolios and in differentiating planning to address the needs of all students.

The school has developed a range of highly effective partnerships and programs to complement staff skills and to broaden students' learning experiences which make valuable contributions to their all round education as exemplified by the work of the Daniel Gwartzman Dance Company, Puppetry Program, and volunteers from the New York Cares project.

**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 is monitored and evaluated consistently by the school administration. The review of the plan's goals takes place in collaborative meetings throughout the academic year, involving the principal, assistant principal, lead teachers, and coaches. There is currently some misalignment, however, as the initiatives that the school has been working successfully on in the current year with demonstrable impact do not relate closely enough to the plan.

The instructional leadership has been effective in using benchmark data and diagnostic assessments to make adjustments to plans linked to their main initiatives, such as the development of the mathematics curriculum and the strengthening of the academic intervention service. This has been done informally, using well-honed professional intuition, rather than formally with reference to sharply defined success criteria at regular pre-determined intervals during the course of the year. Without establishing objectively measurable success criteria at the start of a major initiative, the school is not in a position to celebrate the progress it has made in meeting its goals or in knowing for certain that any realignment of resources is based on reliable evidence.

The school has been more effective in evaluating the progress of individual students, groups and classes during the course of the year as there is a much sharper alignment between systems and structures, and the way in which decisions are made based on a thorough interrogation of data to measure both performance and progress. The school recognizes that there is still some way to go in ensuring that the goals set for individual students are sufficiently specific to enable fine tuning to take place.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Sidney Silverstein Little Sparrow School (PS 88)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

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

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

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

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	