



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Public School 97

**1375 Mace Avenue
Bronx
NY 10469**

Principal: Kathleen Bornkamp

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Reviewer: John Francis

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

This is an elementary school of 721 students from pre-kindergarten through to grade 5 located in the Pelham Parkway section of the Bronx. The school population comprises around 50% Black, 30% Hispanic and 11% White, with 9% other groups. The main language is English and just over 4% of the students are English language learners with Spanish being the dominant language in this group. The school has around 15% of students who are referred for special education. Many of the students are transported into school by bus as they live outside the immediate area. The school has been eligible for Title 1 funding for the past three years. After experiencing attendance rates that were for a number of years broadly the same as those for similar schools as well as City averages, currently the school's attendance rates are well above both these benchmarks.

The current principal took up the post six weeks ago at the beginning of this academic year and has already begun a review of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Currently almost half of the teachers are non-tenured and many are relatively inexperienced. Almost half the staff has less than two years experience.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The new principal is giving strong and enthusiastic leadership and is well supported by her assistant principal and her cabinet.
- The leadership team is making a detailed evaluation of the school and is further developing the strategies that are in place to improve teachers' understanding of data, showing how it can be used to better target instruction.
- Students' attitudes and general behavior are good; they enjoy learning and are attentive in class.
- The school's positive culture is recognized by students, teachers and parents, all of whom appreciate the principal's high profile and accessibility.
- There is a well developed culture of support among the teachers who work well together and willingly share ideas.
- For those students most in need, an effective range of intervention strategies supports their learning.
- Students are eager to come to school, enjoy the opportunities for 'hands on' learning and work diligently on their tasks.
- A wide range of informative and well-structured prompts produced and displayed by teachers in their classrooms give helpful guidance to students.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to raise the teachers' level of understanding of how the data they collect in their assessment binders can be used to more accurately meet the individual needs of students.
- Further develop individual targets and expectations for students and systems to monitor their progress towards these.
- Continue to develop the use of classroom assessment portfolios and make them more evaluative.
- Continue to develop opportunities to collaborate, work together and share best practices.
- Ensure that the Comprehensive Education Plan has clear and measurable success criteria.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The new principal has made a quick and accurate assessment of the school's situation and has begun to put strategies into place to address the gaps identified. Some of these reflect a lack of sophistication among some staff in the analysis and use of data. Teachers know what levels their students are working at, but are not always sufficiently aware of the differences in students' performance and what they need to target to help them make more rapid progress. This weakness is being addressed through high quality professional development at school and grade level. The administration and cabinet are very honest in their evaluation of the current position and know that they can make even better use of the available data to establish a more effective assessment system. Many of the teachers are relatively inexperienced, but are keen to improve their skills and show a great commitment to the school and its students. This also shows in the strong culture of cooperation and the teachers' willingness to learn from each other.

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 generates a suitable range of data, which is used effectively to assign students to classes and to identify general trends in performance by different groups of students, including gender groups and by ethnicity. The school maintains particularly good records for vulnerable students, special education students and English language learners. Given the high turnover of staff, it is essential that the school does whatever it can to ensure consistency and continuity in learning. The new principal is clearly focused on school improvement and has begun to introduce a range of strategies with particular emphasis on data collection and analysis. The leadership is clear that without this clear and accurate information, teachers cannot plan accurately what students need to focus on to make further progress.

There are some well maintained portfolios of work that travel through the school with the students but these are not sufficiently evaluative and do not contain graded examples of work. However, good progress has already been made in setting out a strategy for internal assessment that will provide more detailed information to the administration, teachers and students. The professional development undertaken at whole school and grade level is closely focused on bringing greater detail to individual students' records, including more effective use of assessment binders, to allow for easy tracking over time and the accurate setting of targets.

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 school gathers and analyzes a range of data which is generally used effectively to identify the specific needs of students. This data is most effective when used for identifying the needs of special education students and preparing intervention programs to support their learning. The pupil personnel committee, which has a wide membership, decides the necessary interventions through analyzing needs. Some teachers are very skilled at matching work accurately to the needs of specific students. However, in several other classes the relatively inexperienced staff still require considerable support in the setting of goals at all levels since they are not all fully conversant with analyzing data. Much good work is now being done throughout the school to make good this weakness and so the overall use of data is proficient, and improving. The school’s Comprehensive Education Plan has clear numerical targets but it is not clear how these will be achieved or how progress towards them will be monitored.

The school has well developed systems for identifying the weaknesses of its most needy students and deciding on intervention strategies. For those students, the academic intervention service prepares effective programs to support their learning. Records show that these are effective in helping the students to make progress.

An increasing number of parents work closely with the school and appreciate the changes that the new principal has introduced. They like the high profile she has in and around school, feel she is genuinely interested in their children and sets the tone for the school. The parent coordinator is working hard, and with increasing success, to improve parental involvement and the most recent parent workshops have been well attended.

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.

Teachers have a secure understanding of the performance levels that their students have achieved and through the workshop model, make general adjustments to their lesson plans to reflect this information, particularly in literacy instruction. This information has also been used effectively to develop comprehensive curriculum maps for each grade. Teachers are now developing a much clearer knowledge of exactly where students are placed within these levels. Teachers are now aware of the need to monitor carefully those students that are at the bottom end of the levels and how to reinforce the skills they need to prevent them slipping back. Careful decisions have been made about staffing through an initial analysis of need and, for example, the retention of two part time staff developers and the work of the coaches are bringing additional benefit to the school.

Student attitudes and general behavior are good. They enjoy learning, are attentive in classes and apply themselves well to their tasks. However, some students say that they feel they could do harder work. The school is now working hard to fulfill their wishes. The school’s positive culture is recognized and appreciated by students and parents who feel

the school has a calm and positive feel to it. Good strategies for encouraging attendance have had the effect of raising this to above the averages for both similar schools and the City as a whole.

All classrooms have a wide range of informative and well structured prompts produced and displayed by teachers to give helpful guidance to students, particularly in writing and mathematics. Many also display the grading rubrics. Some teachers have helpfully rewritten these in a way that the students can readily understand.

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.

There are good recruitment systems for new staff, who are carefully selected to fit in with the school's culture. Classroom observations and learning walks provide much information for the administration on the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning across the school. This regular monitoring is particularly important with the high number of non-tenured teachers. Many of the teachers are inexperienced although they generally have secure subject knowledge. Through guidance, they are improving their classroom management skills, where necessary, with support from the leadership and each other. Areas for development are recorded and followed up, as are the strengths that are observed. Part of the culture is to identify good practice and to use these teachers to spread this across the school. All have a great commitment to the school.

Teachers work in a very collaborative and supportive way. This strong culture of collaboration and support is seen in their willingness to share their own practice with others and their openness to new ideas. There is also a strong emphasis on, and commitment to, professional development through grade conferences, the work of the literacy and mathematic coaches and the school's two part-time professional developers. The impact of their work is seen in grade conferences where they play an important role. The budget is used well to provide funding to support this. The main focus of future professional development at grade and whole school level is on the effective use of data. However, there is not yet a strategy in place for differentiating the range of professional development to make it more responsive to the needs of individuals.

The principal is well respected and has good capacity to manage change in the school. The school generally runs smoothly and procedures are clear and followed. Partnerships with outside bodies and support services are developing well.

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 new principal has a very clear vision for the school and is being well supported by the assistant principal. She is sensibly taking time to evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses. Through early analysis, the administration is gaining a better understanding

of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is working towards whole school development. Their initial evaluation of the school is accurate and perceptive. Using her own performance review, the principal is setting clear, measurable targets for improvement across all aspects of the school's work. This detail is not seen in the current Comprehensive Educational Plan. This does not have such sharp targets or a calendar to show how and when these will be monitored and evaluated to keep them on track. However the school is now able to track the progress towards its goals and to assess the extent to which plans have made a difference to students' achievement. The introduction of more formal procedures for checking on progress and evaluating the impact of these initiatives is beginning to have a positive impact on raising standards still higher.

The school is effective in preparing plans for those students in the greatest need of support, particularly through the work of the academic intervention services, but is less effective in evaluating these. Through grade conferences and monitoring, the principal has recognized that there is insufficient rigor and objectivity in the way teachers use comparative data. The school is now working very hard to ensure that the quality of instruction in each class is consistently good and that instruction is aligned to the different needs and capabilities of individual students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 097 [PS 097]	∅	✓	+
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	