



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Philip J Abinanti School

Public School 108

**1166 Neill Avenue
Bronx
NY 10461**

Principal: Charles Sperrazza

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Reviewer: Joy Stopher

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Philip J. Abinanti School, Public School 108, is a kindergarten through 5th grade school situated in the Bronx and has 585 students enrolled. The student population is of a very diverse nature with 36% White, a similar percentage of Hispanic, just under 10% Black and the remainder made up of Asian and Others. There is a significant Albanian group and further diversity amongst the students whose parents are on short-term internships at the nearby medical center. Special education students account for just over 10% of the student population and this figure is relatively stable. Nine percent of students are Title 1 eligible. Attendance is very good at just under 96%; it is frequently the highest attendance in the area. Approximately 8% of students are English language learners. This population is growing as the students in the kindergarten and the 1st grade represent 50% of all English language learner students.

The school is currently undergoing extensive building construction and health and safety issues are correctly being given a high priority.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Standards of achievement are high and underpinned by academic rigor and good inclusive practices.
- Achievement in writing and social studies is exceptional.
- Technology is well-established and there is a good ratio of computers to students.
- Staff and students have high expectations.
- Planning and goal-setting are effective and strengthened through collaborative practice.
- The new principal is committed to excellence.
- The quality and consistency of instruction is of a high standard.
- Students are actively engaged in learning through a variety of methods and enrichment program.
- All staff constantly reflect on their practice and willingly help each other.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and play an active part in its success.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the number of students who achieve level 4 by further developing strategies to enhance the progress of high achievers and those who are gifted and talented.
- Develop the role of the student council so that they can take more responsibility and contribute to the school's aims and goals.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school with some outstanding features.

Standards of achievement in the New York City and New York State standardized tests have shown continuous improvement and the school's results are now above those achieved by similar and City schools. This has been achieved by implementing the school's vision to *'provide a comprehensive, rigorous, exciting educational program with an emphasis on literacy and mathematics development'*. Students of all levels of performance work together in an inclusive environment characterized by high expectations. Assessment procedures are very well developed and used to inform instruction. The quality of instruction is consistently high and teachers are constantly seeking ways in which to improve. They work collaboratively and willingly share ideas and expertise. The new principal, the cabinet and teachers are committed to continued excellence.

Achievement in writing and social studies is outstanding and the school has the full support of parents who are delighted with the progress their children make. Right from the start of kindergarten, students are taught to enjoy their studies and given a rich and stimulating environment in which to learn. They make very good progress and those who need additional support are identified quickly. Students, and their parents, who have transferred from other schools are quite clear in their recognition of the quality of education provided by PS 108. Parents and the wider community are justifiably proud of their school.

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.

Very good use is made of a wide range of data to ensure that instruction is aligned to the specific needs of all students. This is seen for example in the use of Record of Oral Language, the Princeton Review Interim and diagnostic assessments. In addition, the school has created assessment portfolios for reading and writing, informal teacher assessments, student portfolios and analysis of work with regard to grade-specific standards. Teachers exchange portfolios at the end of each academic year and carry out further assessments at the beginning. Common planning periods and articulation time contribute to the effective way in which teachers are able to keep their knowledge of performance and progress up to date. They are well supported by senior staff.

Detailed analysis takes place for all students and includes such groups as hold-over and summer school attendees as well as ethnic groups, special education students and English language learners. Good use is made of regional reports to make comparisons with other schools. The school is a Collaborative Community of Practice school and regular visits are made to a partnership school as part of the effective, on-going, professional development.

Each teacher maintains a continuous assessment binder which include class profiles in literacy and mathematics and individual progress grids which track each student throughout the year. The school is currently looking at ways in which this very extensive range of data can be condensed and focused, most likely through the use of information technology. The use of data to analyze student performance and inform subsequent instruction has been a major factor in the school's success.

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

This area of the school's work is well-developed with significant strengths.

The commitment of school leaders and all staff to achieving excellence, setting high goals and achieving them is central to the success of the school. Students and parents are part of this process and the constant drive to improve performance at all levels is quite outstanding. The Comprehensive Education Plan sets out clear plans and timeframes and the goals are communicated through the administrative binder.

There is a strong commitment to their principles of learning. Inquiry, problem-solving and decision-making are rightly seen as integral parts of the education program that enables students to achieve. Parents are involved, not only through the leadership team, but through the monthly parent cafes, regular surveys and the monthly school newsletter.

The school sets high goals and intends to eradicate the number of level 1 and 2 grades and increase level 3, and particularly level 4 grades. There is a consistent focus on improving the performance of those students with the greatest need for improvement. The school recognizes the need to extend the learning opportunities of its higher-achieving and gifted and talented students and to give them more responsibility by developing the role of the student council for example.

Assessment and continual reflection takes place in different groups and collaborative teams. Grade conferences are held once a month to examine practice and thinking, monitor progress in order to improve teaching and to accelerate learning. The high expectations are what the school is about and *'people understand and won't settle for anything else'*.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

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

The comprehensive curriculum map was established two years ago and is regularly updated. This forms the basis of the very effective program for learning. A particular strength of the school's curriculum provision is the arrangements for enrichment with a wide range of exciting opportunities for students to learn. A "Children's Thoughts Newspaper" is produced three times a year and involves students as writers and reporters; parents are involved too. Other beneficial activities include 'Math Problem of the Month', the Science Fair in late December, 'Artist of the Year' and the Sports 'Field Day' which is a school and community event.

Planning is of a high quality and is always done collaboratively with a strong focus on improving practice and outcomes. Teachers are fully accountable and the quality of instruction is high with work well matched to the needs of students. As a result, students are actively engaged in their learning and not only achieve high standards but enjoy learning. Academic rigor, critical thinking skills and opportunities to apply learning to new situations are well fostered. There is now an opportunity to involve students in taking more responsibility by developing the role of the student council.

A particular strength in promoting high standards in science, the arts, physical education and technology is the use of cluster teachers who are experts in their field and work with students during the class teacher's preparation and lunch period. This is an example of the very effective staff and scheduling decisions and the good use of the available budget. Technology is also well established. Attendance is notably high and its importance regularly reinforced.

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.

Staff are selected by means of a rigorous process intended to ensure that they share the school's commitment to excellence and have the necessary skills to deliver high quality instruction. The process is a further example of the school's collaborative approach. The cabinet is fully involved in the selection of new staff. Candidates are asked a series of questions based on literacy and they are also rated on the basis of their understanding of how assessment relates to instruction as well as being expected to demonstrate their classroom practice. The consistency and quality of instruction is testimony to the effectiveness of this process.

Classroom observation is well integrated both formally and informally. Elements of good practice in the observations, particularly informal, include looking at the level of student engagement, the quality of work, the classroom environment and the correlation of notebooks with planning. Teachers are given a clear indication of what is expected of them and feedback is timely and relevant. Good use is made of collaborative class visits to establish the level of consistency and the outcomes of the observations are used to set targets for individual and whole school practice.

Mathematics and literacy coaches provide good support, and professional development generally is well matched to need. The examination of student work is part of the identification process for professional development. The arrangements for professional development are good and all staff are expected to 'turn-key' and write reports for others. Requests for development topics are generated during collaborative planning meetings, grade conferences, teacher surveys and preference sheets. The school has a very beneficial relationship with the Teachers' College of Columbia where teachers attend courses which focus on particular skills and strategies. Unsurprisingly, the school is used as an exemplar which provides useful opportunities to meet with teachers from other schools and share best practice. The school enjoys a very supportive relationship with the Morris Park Community Association.

Communication systems are very effective and, as a result, the school runs smoothly. The new principal has already demonstrated a commitment to continuing and improving the

current high standards. He has the support of all staff in achieving this objective and has already built good relationships with parents.

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 well-developed.

The foundation of the school's success has been built on its very good systems and structures for constant evaluation, monitoring and review of student progress and adapting instruction to reflect need. The school improvement process takes account of interim evaluations and adjusts its goals accordingly. The recently formulated Fact Patterns in literacy and mathematics represents a determination to improve the monitoring and analysis of individual and class performance and progress. The thorough research has included analysis of relationships, staff data, grade profiles, teacher attendance and student attendance. The school recognizes that this will be a powerful tool for further refinement of the use of data.

The culture of the school is such that problems or concerns become immediately apparent. This may come from the class teacher, senior staff through monitoring, or support staff, but is just as likely to be raised by a student or parent. The school is very much a caring, mutually supportive community. Students support each other. Parents are fully behind the work of the school. The arrangements for pre-school i.e. the Breakfast Club and the YMCA activity program after school are all staffed by those committed to providing the best education for all students. Once a concern is raised, it is dealt with. This is a very good school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Philip J Abinanti School (PS 108)	∅	✓	+
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			
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