



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Castle Hill School

Middle School 127

**1560 Purdy Street
Bronx
NY 11462**

Principal: Harry Sherman

Dates of review: October 23 - 25, 2006

Reviewer: Stuart Satinet

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

This is a neighborhood middle school serving approximately 850 students in grades 5 through to 8. It is located in the Parkchester district of the Bronx and has a diverse ethnic mix. The student population is 46% Hispanic, 39% Black, 13% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% White. There is high mobility and this affects the continuity of education and the overall achievement of many of the students. The school was built in 1954 and has reduced in size considerably over recent years, partly because of the opening of a new school in the area. It is now using approximately 80.5% of its physical capacity. The student population has 10% English language learning students and 15% special education students. Figures for 2003-05 indicate that the percentage of students who were Title 1 eligible was 81% and this exceeds the average figure for City schools. At 92% average attendance figures are broadly comparable with similar and City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has analyzed the needs of the school and has a clear vision as to how it can be moved forward.
- There is a commitment to developing a culture where data is collected, understood and applied to the task of improving teaching and learning.
- The administration has established a collaborative approach to school improvement centered on open dialogue at Tier 3 Meetings.
- It is developing a more positive culture in the school through the introduction of Positive Behavior Intervention Supports.
- It has organized itself effectively by establishing three new academies that have had a positive impact on the culture of the school.
- New collaborative teams have been created which are starting to have an impact on school improvement.
- New attendance procedures and interventions have been developed and these are starting to have an impact on student participation.
- It provides a growing range of extra-curricular activities for students which is helping to increase engagement.
- The program of formal and informal classroom observations has created a powerful dialogue about teaching and learning.
- The range, quality and quantity of interventions to support the most vulnerable students have increased, and are having a positive impact on achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Build the capacity of staff to gather and use data to inform their teaching and planning.
- Build the capacity of staff to set measurable improvement goals for individual students.
- Extend the range of learning strategies used in the school with an emphasis on differentiating teaching to meet the needs of individual students.
- Improve the dialogue and communication with parents further so that there is a shared understanding of what students need to do to improve.
- Extend peer inter -visitations among staff to encourage a culture of professional growth where teachers develop their skills through observing the practice of others.
- Re-focus the professional development program to meet the changing priorities of the school.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school.

The principal and administration have a clear agenda for improving the school and are working collaboratively with a range of staff to reorganize structures, develop teaching and learning strategies and increase the level of student engagement. This has had a positive impact on the tone of the school but new systems have not yet had time to affect significantly overall academic achievement. Although the use of data at a whole school level has been extended, it is not yet used consistently to identify the individual needs of students. There are considerable variations in assessment strategies but the school is starting to make progress in achieving greater consistency through professional development.

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 undeveloped.

The principal and administration collect and analyze data generated by State and City standardized tests. This is shared with some teachers through Tier 3 meetings and the information has begun to be used to interpret the overall progress of students in each gradelevel in the school. The school is developing strategies to understand the performance of individual students but, at this stage, does not have effective systems in place to provide a constantly updated picture of progress. New York State Testing Program contents strand performance data has recently been reviewed and has led to some useful assessments of progress in defined skill areas. The school is also using Continental Press data, which provides item analysis in literacy, and has begun to work with consultants to use the Princeton Review Homeroom tool to identify skill development in math. At this stage, the school administration has shown a commitment to using data but is still considering the most effective ways to use the data across the school with individual teachers.

There is not a consistent approach to recording and reviewing data for individual students at class level. Different teachers use different assessment strategies and individual assessment records are variable. There is recognition that greater consistency could be achieved by the implementation of common systems and procedures for staff across the school. There has been insufficient professional development to ensure that data is applied consistently to improve learning across the school. Teachers are at varying stages of readiness to take on a development of this kind. In the past year much work has gone into analyzing the performance of those students with the highest need and this has led to well targeted interventions to raise achievement but this approach has not yet been extended to include other categories of students of interest to the school.

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 undeveloped.

The school sets improvement goals at a strategic level but practice at an individual student and class level is still undeveloped. Goals for improvement set by the school in the Comprehensive Education Plan identify time scales and focus appropriately on statistical improvement in student achievement. Intervention strategies have been identified and are broken down into separate tasks that need to be completed during the year. The school has successfully identified relevant programs that meet the needs of those that are in most need of improvement.

The principal has defined some suitable goals for the further development of the school and these have the clear aim of raising expectations throughout the school. The administration has agreed targets to improve student behavior, to develop the academy system, to create a culture of professional growth and to improve student engagement. These goals are shared through discussions which take place in Tier 111 meetings and this has begun to encourage collaboration. Some goals are linked to data. This is true of the attendance objective which aims to achieve 92% attendance for the year. However, there is not a formal goal setting process for teachers that is linked to the use of data. Students are encouraged to develop their skills and to improve their grade scores but are not set specific targets linked to data analysis. Teachers do not consistently set measurable improvement goals for individual students.

Contacts are made with parents during the year; a parent/student handbook is distributed, parent/teacher conferences take place twice a year and some letters are sent home about academic issues but there is insufficient contact with parents over what their children need to do to improve.

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 principal has analyzed the needs of the school and has a clear vision as to how it can be moved forward. He is beginning to take steps to align the curriculum so that teachers are able to focus on the individual skill development of students. An example of this is the introduction of the Princeton Homeroom model which encourages item skills analysis. An extensive reorganization of the school structure has taken place and three new academies have been established. This has had a positive impact on the tone of the school. The meetings of academy teams have started to encourage the process of collaborative planning and this is starting to have an impact on teaching and learning. Although teachers are aware of overall performance data, there is limited use of individual student data to inform teaching and planning. There is limited use of differentiated teaching strategies in general education and students are not consistently engaged in learning in some lessons.

Scheduling decisions and staff appointments have been used to create new teams in the school and these have been effective in encouraging greater collaboration. Steps have been taken to develop a more positive culture in the school through the introduction of a

program called "Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports," and this has begun to have an impact on behavior. Progress has been made in developing new attendance procedures and interventions are now having an impact on student participation rates. There has been an increase in extra-curricular activities for students and these have been effective in creating a more positive culture.

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 has been in the school for just over a year. In that time he has made some key appointments which have had a positive effect on school planning. He has successfully restructured the academy system; the 5th grade academy is designed to provide a secure base when students start at the school and the two academies which are led by the assistant principals are organised to reduce movement and produce a small-school culture for grades 6 through 8. This has improved the communication and has enabled the school to run more effectively. The academy re-organisation has improved the tone of the school. The principal and administration have taken effective steps to establish a collaborative approach to school improvement which is centered on open dialogue at Tier 3 Meetings. Useful discussions on improvement strategies also take place at academy meetings.

The principal has been heavily involved in meeting with English language arts teachers to discuss their teaching and this is starting to extend the range of teaching strategies used in the school. He regularly visits the classrooms and teachers recognise that there is an increased focus on their teaching "There's a focus on how we're instructing...the principal calls in all the time". In addition, a program of formal and informal lesson observations has been effective in creating a dialogue about teaching and learning but peer inter-visitations among staff have been more limited. The principal recognises that a program of this kind would help to meet one of the school goals of encouraging a culture of professional growth where teachers develop their skills through observing the practice of others. The school has been successful in increasing the range of support to students and is effectively developing more contact with outside bodies.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped.

The Comprehensive Education Plan includes improvement goals which are often related to measurable end-of-year success criteria. Tasks related to these goals are clearly identified. The direction is apparent at a whole-school level but plans are less well developed at a faculty or individual student level. Steps are being taken to develop this area as a means of adjusting plans during the year. Progress has been made in reviewing overall plans and analyzing periodic assessments. The administration and Tier 3 meetings are being used to review performance data. These groups also consider future policy and are taking useful steps to establish a culture where there is a cycle of monitoring and revising plans.

The progress of individual students with high needs is discussed and interventions are agreed upon and monitored. There is less consistency of practice in general education. The school is at an early stage of using its new overall system for identifying individual skill development which can be applied to all students. The involvement of students in identifying the skills they need to develop to make progress is undeveloped. There is no system to ensure that the student, the teacher and the parent have a common awareness of what needs to be done to make progress. However, this approach is beginning to be developed through academy meetings. It is recognized that many teachers have had insufficient professional development aimed at using data to increase the achievement of their students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Castle Hill School (MS 127)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score	X		

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

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

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

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