



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Samuel Randall School**

**Public School 138**

**2060 Lafayette Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10473**

**Principal: Lorraine Carroll-Dawkins**

**Dates of review: October 31 - November 1, 2006**

**Reviewer: Graham Preston**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Samuel Randall School provides kindergarten to fourth grade education for approximately 800 students who mostly live in the Soundview section of the Bronx. Hispanic students make up 56% of students and Black over 40%. Compared with other City schools, Samuel Randall has relatively few students recently arrived in the country and English language learners, but does have a larger than average proportion of students who are Title 1 eligible. Samuel Randall has 13% special education students. It also has an academy with specific programs for those who are excelling academically. Student attendance rates are now better than the City average.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The good use of varied data and strategies for improvement has helped the school improve its literacy and mathematics scores in 2006.
- The leadership of the principal maintains high expectations and a clear vision for the school.
- Senior and other key staff play a major role in monitoring and supporting school improvement.
- The academic intervention services support student learning well.
- Outside agencies and consultants are used effectively to stimulate improvement and develop staff.
- Very good links with parents have improved student attendance and involved parents more closely in their children's education.
- Staff and students are pleased with the positive and supportive learning environment.
- There has been a real effort to enrich students' experience through the arts and music, in particular, as illustrated by the successful school band and regular celebrations and events.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that newer and less effective teachers come up to the good standards of others.
- Use comparative school performance data more effectively in self-evaluation.
- Build the expertise of staffing using data to differentiate instruction.
- Extend the monitoring used for underperforming students to help ensure that middle- and higher-achieving students are doing as well as they can.
- Increase the use of information technology to develop students' literacy and research skills.
- Develop action plans to support the Comprehensive Education Plan which clearly show measurable interim goals, with success criteria and timescales against which to evaluate progress, and share these with staff to develop their involvement in whole-school improvement.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a proficient school with a number of well-developed features.**

Samuel Randall is a popular and increasingly successful school that has developed strong links with parents, as reflected by their increased participation in their children's learning and the improved student attendance rate. It is a welcoming school that is highly valued by parents and students, who appreciate its positive and supportive environment. It has very strong leadership and a cohesive leadership team that has developed a number of support strategies to successfully overcome some weaknesses in staffing. Data is used well to monitor students and the substantial learning support program is effective in supplementing the main instructional program.

The next steps for the school are to further develop teachers' use of data to guide instruction, and to raise expectations for higher-achieving students. In addition, school planning would be more widely understood and more easily monitored by summarizing priorities and developing interim goals and timescales.

### 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.**

The school collects very detailed data on students' performance using a wide variety of monitoring and recording instruments. The data is used well to monitor carefully the progress of individual students and overall performance at classroom and grade level. There is less rigorous analysis by gender and ethnicity. The school's frequent testing is strongly focused on driving up standards in mathematics and English language arts. Testing also enables the school to identify those students who would benefit from its academic intervention services for additional learning support as well as the after-school and Saturday literacy and mathematics programs. The data is used to track in detail the progress of English language learners.

The school's concerted drive to better analyze student performance data and provide focused support has had a positive impact on progress and achievement. There are noticeable improvements in both mathematics and English language arts State and City test results. The school now performs at least as well as similar schools. The principal recognizes that the school needs to use similar school comparisons as part of a more rigorous self-evaluation process.

**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 in most aspects.**

The school recognizes that with the steady turnover in teachers, a proportion of staff have yet to fully develop their teaching skills to meet the particular challenges provided by the school. Consequently, class and grade teachers are given very clear and structured instructional programs and some receive additional support. Although an improving situation, some teachers do not use data sufficiently to adjust their teaching to meet the needs of all students, are less creative in engaging student interest and less rigorous in grading work to help students make better progress. The school is largely successful in offsetting these weaknesses by working with staff to identify students not likely to reach the expected level and providing additional learning support during the day, after school and Saturday morning, as part of its academic intervention services. This reflects effective use of the additional funding the school receives.

The school carefully monitors the needs of its special education students. It also caters to the needs of those who are excelling academically. However, the school recognizes that with its focus on ensuring that students at least reach the required level, it does not always ensure that some middle- and higher-ability students are reaching even higher standards. Overall, the school is very largely successful in ensuring that students are challenged and engaged in their learning and any concerns are quickly followed up through direct contact with the parents. The same prompt action follows any significant poor behavior or lack of cooperation by the student. The high turnout for parent/teacher conferences and parents’ readiness to participate in learning workshops in order to support their children’s learning at home, reflect much of the good work of the school.

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

**This area of the school’s work is proficient with some well developed aspects.**

The comprehensive monitoring and assessment data is used very well by the key staff who plan the curriculum. They work closely as a team to develop and adapt the learning programs used by the class and grade teachers. In this, the school also involves specialist consultants to develop those programs. The principal and her key staff are highly committed to ensuring that their students leave the school with, at a minimum, sound literacy and mathematics skills. This shapes much of their efforts in checking student progress and triggering its very good range of academic intervention services that complement the main instructional programs. While the school has been particularly effective in its support work, it has been less successful in ensuring that all staff provide more differentiated learning activities in class so as to give appropriate levels of challenge to students with different aptitudes. Constraints on staff development are slowing its efforts to improve this aspect.

The budget and staffing are carefully used to best meet students’ needs. Additional funds are appropriately directed at those students in most need of support.

The school makes offers a diverse range of programs for all its students. These include lower-achieving students in its SAGE (Students Academically Growing Everyday) Academy as well as those who benefit from more challenging learning programs in its SEA (Students Excelling Academically) Academy. Allocation to these programs is made using performance data. Despite clear strengths in the curriculum, information technology is less developed and is mostly used to support learning programs. There are missed opportunities for the school to utilize computers for record keeping and for monitoring students' progress. More importantly, there are insufficient opportunities for students to use word-processing, desktop publishing and the Internet to better develop literacy and personal research skills.

The school is also committed to broadening students' education beyond basic skills. It uses an additional grant to promote arts in the curriculum. One aspect of this is reflected in the successful establishment of a large school band and stimulating an interest in performance that has encouraged parents to financially support individual lessons and instruction for their children.

Samuel Randall is a caring and supportive school. Students feel well supported and valued in what is a calm and safe environment. For these and other reasons, the students like coming to school. The school has its share of students with unique personal as well as learning needs, and this results in occasional distractions in class. However, the staff focus on developing respect for each other helps most students to behave well.

Attendance is above the City average and reflects both the students' commitment and the school's successful efforts to involve parents more in the education of their children. The school quickly responds to absence and communicates directly with parents to resolve problems.

**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 school is very well led by the principal who has high expectations and a clear vision. Her drive and enthusiasm have helped maintain the steady improvement of the school over recent years. In this, she is well supported by her assistant principals and other key staff. Parents see Samuel Randall as a good school, and one that has clearly improved.

Staff talk positively about the principal being actively involved in the support and development of teachers and maintaining a major presence around the school. Nonetheless, she and others comment on the constraints placed on school improvement by staff turnover and the limited available time to properly prepare new teachers for the specific challenges provided by the school. Consequently, the school places considerable emphasis on observing and supporting colleagues as part of staff development, though clearly the school would like to have more time for specific training. Despite this level of support, there remain some teachers who do not accept the growing culture of reflection on their own and their students' performance to improve their practice.

The commitment of many staff to improvement is considerable and this is well reflected in the detailed school planning that takes place. Morale in the school is generally high. While the school does lose teachers who use the valuable training and experience to gain

promotion elsewhere, there are many others who are very attached to the school and value the strong community spirit that exists.

The school commitment to rising standards is further reflected in its after-school and Saturday classes that are a key part in school improvement. Effective use is made of support services to meet students' additional needs. For the most part, the school is calm and orderly, although there is some occasional minor disruption because of the few students with behavioral difficulties.

**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 with well developed features.**

The school has effective monitoring systems that check the progress of students and the quality of the programs it offers. Senior and middle managers use their internal checks to identify and respond to any concerns. As indicated above, the range of additional learning support is a direct response to this careful monitoring of student's progress and teaching and learning. This process works at individual, class and grade levels. The third tier meetings of key staff regularly review the progress of students and the effectiveness of instruction against school-developed measures. These form the basis of adapting current policies and procedures. A small qualification to an otherwise positive picture is a need to show the same rigor in monitoring middle- and higher-achieving students' progress.

Regular reviews form part of the school Comprehensive Education Plan which provides a realistic appraisal of progress made and work to be done. In what is a very complex document, main school developments are not clearly prioritized and there are no action plans that clearly spell out responsibilities, costs and timescales. This makes it difficult to evaluate the school's progress towards its goals, or to ensure that all staff understand these and can unite behind them.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

|  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>SCHOOL NAME: Samuel Randall School (PS 138)</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 |   |