



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Evergreen School

Public School 152

**Evergreen Avenue
Bronx
NY 10472**

Principal: Frances J Lynch

Dates of review: October 20 and 23, 2006

Reviewer: John Francis

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 elementary school of 897 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten were only added this September and full integration of students and staff is hampered by these students being housed in a separate building seven blocks away. The school population comprises 70% Hispanic and 27.6% Black students, with a small number of other groups. A little over 25% of the students are English language learners. Around 9% are special education students. The school has received Title 1 funding for the past three years. Attendance rates at 91.6% are above those of similar schools but slightly below the City average. In spite of nearly 10% of students living in temporary housing, attendance continues to rise steadily because of the range of effective strategies in place.

The principal took up the post two years ago and has made many significant changes to the school's systems and raised expectations. Many of the teachers are relatively inexperienced.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has very high aspirations for her students and because of her determination and very clear vision has rapidly improved this school.
- The principal and the assistant principals provide high quality leadership in support of students and teachers and constantly seek ways to drive forward improvements.
- School leaders analyze data and use the results to accurately align instruction.
- All staff understand the importance of data in shaping their practice and use it effectively to improve the organization of curriculum and instruction.
- Well developed tracking and recording systems ensure teachers are aware of those students who should be pushed on to higher achievement and those who could be in danger of slipping back if not supported.
- The strong culture of collaboration among teachers for sharing ideas and methodology helps to ensure consistency of instruction.
- Teachers and instructional support staff look at the development of the whole child and ensure no needs, whether academic, emotional or physical, are overlooked.
- Detailed grading of work based on a clearly shared understanding among teachers of the standards for each subject and grade level makes a vital contribution to students' progress.
- Regular modeling of best practices in literacy and mathematics instruction is creating a common approach across the school.
- The school has a strong family culture where students enjoy school and feel well supported and cared for.

What the school needs to improve

- Implement more detailed analysis of the performance of different student groupings to further evaluate trends and the effectiveness of different teaching styles.
- Make the tracking sheets even more responsive to students' and teachers' needs by setting clear annual targets for each student.
- Use students' work to create portfolios of exemplars for each grade and performance level that can be used by teachers as a reference book of agreed standards for calibrating the assessment of students' work.
- Increase the role of parents in school planning and decision-making through early implementation of strategies already planned.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

In two years the principal has brought about a remarkable change in the school; a judgment reinforced by the views of students, parents and staff. As one person commented that 'This school has a rhythm, a beat.' Now at the start of her third year, the principal's drive for continued improvement shows no signs of diminishing. The support of the assistant principals and indeed the contribution of all the staff combine with this to make the whole greater than the sum of the parts. While achievement is still below the level expected, or indeed targeted, steady improvements over time show the rate of students' progress is starting to gain pace. Much has been done to stabilize the school and the addition of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten now provides complete elementary education. However, while the youngest students and their teachers are fully part of the school's team and culture, they are physically very much separated, which serves as a barrier to full integration of both groups.

All involved in the school have the same high level of commitment. Teachers and students are keen to come to school. Through their visits to classrooms and regular scrutiny of data, the administration knows every child, both socially and academically. There is a strong commitment and purposeful drive to remove as many barriers as possible to their learning. The students enjoy the challenges provided by the teachers, behave well, demonstrate positive attitudes toward all aspects of schooling, and, incidentally, show a strong love of music.

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 has established good systems for collecting and analyzing data from a wide range of sources. Records of regional and State test scores, monthly assessments by classroom teachers and the administration, and other formative records are diligently collected and analyzed. Instructional leaders regularly scrutinise results of school-wide interim assessments, for example, monthly mathematics tests, in addition to data from individual teacher assessments. This ensures that both the school's leadership and the teachers have ready access to the most up-to-date information available in the school. This is used effectively to track individual student performance and compare progress month-by-month and year-by-year. Classroom testing provides detailed discussion points for grade-level and full-faculty conferences on how well aligned teachers' planning is to the curriculum map, whether the same skills are being taught across the grade, how well instruction is aligned to State standards, and what are the next steps for individual students or groups of students.

All of this data regularly feeds into other team meetings, such as the child study team, which monitors and reviews the progress of the most vulnerable students, including special education students and English language learners, as identified through the data gathering process. All of this provides high-quality information for making informed judgements. However, one aspect that is not as well developed is in the disaggregation of some of the finer detail by gender and ethnicity.

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.

The school’s analysis has clearly shown differences in performance across grades. For example, data shows good gains in grades 3 and 5 but a fairly flat profile at grade 4. This is supported by the school’s own data gathered over time. As a result of this, the school has targeted additional support and given extra time to this group in an effort to address these weaknesses. The constant reference to data at the grade-level and faculty conferences is used to challenge everyone’s perceptions of achievement and progress - ‘What does this mean?’ ‘Where do we go from here?’ Expectations of students and teachers are constantly being ratcheted up. Along with regular ranking of classes by achievement, this creates a system where there is no hiding place for students or teachers.

The performance of English language learners is tracked carefully and appropriate intervention put in place. For example, the teacher for English as a second language supports these students in their general education class for both English and mathematics. This ‘push in’ system ensures good continuity in the learning of students alongside their peer group. The achievement of underperforming students or those at risk in other ways is identified and carefully monitored over time. This information is used very effectively at grade level conferences and other regular meetings, for example, those of the child study team, to ensure that the needs of these students, whether academic, social or physical, are addressed.

While parents feel they are involved in the life of the school, there could be more opportunities for their engagement. The school already has long-term plans to increase parental involvement in school planning and decision-making and these should be implemented as early as possible. Parents are treated as partners in the education process and teachers use examples of their child’s work at conferences to show what they are achieving. Where there are concerns about achievement they also show parents what the expected performance should look like and help them understand what they can do to help. The school does not have any calibrated portfolios of students’ work at each performance level for every grade which would help this process and provide a reference book of examples of the expectations that could be easily shared with parents. This would also provide a common reference portfolio for teachers when they are grading students’ work. It would bring an even closer understanding of expectations between teachers in the school and be a natural progression from what is already happening in agreeing on expectations through grade-level conferences and other professional development.

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.

All staff understand the importance of data in shaping their practice and use it effectively to improve the organization of their curriculum and instruction. Students are identified early as possibly in need of additional support or intervention programs but there is an expectation that teachers will review their own instructional practice and try different approaches before formally referring struggling students to the academic intervention service. Through this practice, teachers are developing a better understanding of the differences between students working in groups (a physical arrangement) and differentiated group work based on achievement. The impact of this can be seen in the high levels of student engagement and the quality of ‘accountable talk’ in classes throughout the school.

The grade-level and subject-area record sheets show individual levels and scale scores and clearly indicate how close students are to the grade level standard or the next highest grade. This alerts teachers not only to those who could be pushed on to higher levels but also to those who could slip back if not closely monitored. The tracking sheets, for example in mathematics, record students’ progress monthly and the test regime ensures that teachers are always comparing the performance of students with comparable skills. However, they do not yet include the challenging end-of-year targets, which restricts the school’s ability to respond to any evidence of slippage or intervene at the earliest possible stage.

Student attendance is always a high priority for the school and the strategies in place have seen attendance rise steadily over the last two years, a great success given the high proportion of transient students who are in temporary accommodation. However, improvements to the quality of teachers’ planning and the differentiation of work for students is giving students greater success and self-confidence, which also has the effect of ensuring that they want to come to school.

Careful use of the budget and grants that the school receives ensures good value for the services it uses. The school has a high level of paraprofessional support but can clearly justify this in the way these staff support those students most at risk of failure.

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 administration understands the importance of building the capacity of the teaching staff in order to sustain continuing improvement in student performance. Selection of new teachers is driven by a set of clear guidelines and expectations.

The analysis of data and the resulting evaluations drive almost all aspects of professional development, which is closely aligned to the school’s goals. The approach to professional development involves many constituents, from the administration and coaches to a range of outside partnerships. All partners are very sharply focused on making improvements. Literacy and mathematics coaches are very supportive and through their work, effective

models of practice are identified, publicly celebrated and the strengths shared. Regular modeling of best practices in literacy and mathematics instruction is creating a common approach from one classroom to the next. Recently, teachers produced a detailed curriculum map for each grade that is aimed at promoting coherent development of knowledge and skills in English language arts and mathematics across the curriculum.

Rules, regulations, and procedures are followed consistently, ensuring the smooth running of day-to-day operations. Much has been done to improve students' behavior. Clear expectations alongside carefully aligned work and an appropriate degree of challenge have all contributed to this. Regular and perceptive observations by the administration promote high-quality instruction. Teachers recognize and appreciate the support they receive from the administration, and also appreciate the fact it is not a top-down model. However, they also recognize the accountability this brings. The strong culture of collaboration and of sharing ideas and methodology among all staff is leading to greater consistency in instructional practices. Grade-level meetings provide further opportunities for teachers to discuss important schoolwide matters alongside the main business of student achievement and academic needs. Detailed scoring of work based on a clearly shared understanding between teachers of the standards for each performance level and grade is making a strong contribution to students' progress. However, this system has not been used effectively to create a bank of material that all teachers can use as a reference.

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.

There have been many improvements to the way the school operates, even since last year. There is a clear timetable of activities and systems to measure the effectiveness of instruction and professional development. The goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan are measurable, agreed collaboratively and regularly discussed at meetings of the cabinet and administration, which enables any mid-course corrections to be made on the basis of up-to-date information. However, the plan is currently an unwieldy document whose structure makes it difficult to focus on a number of initiatives at the same time. The most impressive aspect of the work is the way that information from all sources of data is used to plan interventions for those students most at risk through the work of the child study team.

Discussions at meetings at all levels make constant reference to data. This even includes data, gathered from a variety of sources, on the performance of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students, thus providing the most comprehensive picture possible. This not only benefits the teachers of these students but also teachers who receive them as they move through the grades. Although housed some distance away, the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers follow the same rigorous procedures as everyone else in school.

Many successful strategies have been put in place over the last year that are beginning to show results in the form of improved planning and instruction and steadily improving achievement. The latest initiatives are too recent to judge their impact but they are the result of careful analysis and detailed planning. The substantial progress that has been made during the last year indicates that the school is in a strong position to continue improving at the same pace, or even faster.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Evergreen School (PS 152)	∅	✓	+
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