



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Grove Hill School**

**Public School 157**

**757 Cauldwell Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Ramona Duran**

**Dates of review: January 30 - 31, 2007**

**Reviewer: Susan B Jackson**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Grove Hill School is an average sized elementary school in the Bronx. It provides an education for students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. There are currently 584 students enrolled, 77% of whom are Hispanic, 20% are Black and 3% are from other backgrounds. The proportion of special education students is 7%, which is lower than similar and City schools. The number of students who are English language learners has increased recently, and is now 19%, a proportion much higher than similar and City schools. The majority of these students have Spanish as a first language. The school is Title 1 eligible. There is higher than average mobility amongst students. Attendance is 92%, which is close to the average for similar and City schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and the assistant principals lead the school well and enjoy the respect of parents, staff and students.
- The school is managed efficiently on a day to day basis.
- The tone of the school is calm, safe and orderly and students are purposeful and well behaved.
- Teachers show commitment to the school, work hard and manage their classes well.
- Teachers are caring and understand the needs of their students, and this results in positive relationships, good personal development amongst students and a willingness to learn.
- Teamwork is strong and effective throughout the school.
- The performing arts program contributes well to students' enjoyment in learning.
- Very good relationships forged with all members of the school community create a culture in which all are supportive of the school's work.
- The building is exceptionally clean and well organized and is very welcoming with corridors and classrooms filled with vibrant and colorful displays of students' work.
- The varied range of partnership initiatives and visits to places of interest enrich students' learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Facilitate the use of data throughout the school, particularly through the application of technology.
- Further develop the capacity of teachers to understand, use and interpret data through focused professional development.
- Clarify the structure for setting, monitoring and reviewing goals in response to data, and record outcomes formally.
- Continue to develop strategies to raise attendance to a higher level.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

Since her arrival six years ago, the principal has created a calm, safe and orderly community with a firm sense of purpose. Senior leaders work together very effectively as a team and day-to-day administration runs smoothly. Teachers, many of whom are newly-qualified, demonstrate their commitment to the school by working hard and with enthusiasm. Partnership and collaboration contribute to the success of the school, and form the basis of the good levels of professional development support that teachers receive. The positive atmosphere around the school reflects a firm sense of purpose, strong and effective teamwork, and the school's commitment to raising achievement. Students are valued and well known to staff. Behavior around the school and in the classrooms is good, resulting in high levels of student engagement and enjoyment in learning. The school commands respect in the community and parents are pleased with the education that it provides.

The areas for improvement identified in this report are mainly issues that the school has identified for development. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

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

**Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school gathers and evaluates data beyond that received from the State and regional tests. A range of assessments provide teachers with a clear picture of the performance of individual students each year and their progress over time by class, grade and tested subjects. The school makes good use of teachers' conference records and student portfolios. Regular tracking allows teachers to address individual needs and the school to activate a range of intervention programs. Students at risk and those with the greatest need are clearly identified and supported.

The school scrutinizes the performance of key groups of learners that are of particular interest such as special education students and English language learners, and all students close to moving up a level. It does not yet identify performance by ethnicity or gender. Overall comparisons are made across students, classrooms, grade levels and academic subject areas and with the school's own past performance. Using this data, senior leaders are able to make informed decisions when allocating resources and planning new learning, for example the after-school sessions and the gifted and talented programs. The school does not yet compare its performance with similar schools. In addition, the interpretation and review of data lacks systemization across the school and is largely paper based. School leaders recognize the benefits that would accrue from using technology to store and retrieve data so that teachers and administrators can access and interpret the data more easily.

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

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school has well-established organizational structures that encourage collaborative working to set goals and review the school's work. The high level of trust that exists between school leaders and faculty means that teachers are not afraid to reflect on their practice and make changes. The school has gone a long way to harmonize its goals. When visiting classes the consistency of performance is striking. Teachers manage classes well. From the earliest years students know what is expected of them, and do it willingly. All teachers set goals as do specialist staff but there is room for tighter and more focused targeting of annual objectives to students' progress and performance.

Particular attention is given to students who need most help to learn. Clearly detailed goals in education plans drive decisions about which intervention programs to use to help improve and accelerate progress.

Parents are regularly informed about the progress of their children and are invited to the school to celebrate their achievements. Although the school would like to involve more parents in the life of the school, others say that the school is very welcoming and accessible, that any problems are always dealt with efficiently and effectively and that teachers take time to discuss the needs of individual students. In this respect, the work of the bilingual parent coordinator is particularly valued. Parents praise the school's drive to improve performance, which they say is reflected in the challenging goals set and in the regular progress made by their children. High expectations are conveyed to parents and students in all school communications.

Teachers are familiar with the school's set of goals which focus on the school as a whole, on academic subjects, classrooms, grade levels and on group of students. Goal-setting is a collaborative process and school leaders share a vision for school improvement. Success criteria are clearly identified but there is room for further systemization of the planning process, especially in setting timeframes for assessing progress, and for more rigorous interrogation of any identified underperformance of specific groupings of students.

**Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

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

The school follows the mandated curriculum with a focus on improving the quality of instructional activity, especially in English language arts. Literacy is the most powerful aspect of the curriculum and the school is working hard to improve reading and writing skills. Books feature in every classroom and are carefully graded by level for student use. Teachers respond to data and readily differentiate students' instruction, organizing reading clusters and partnerships to provide stimulus. Their aim is to improve the performance of each student. Work is colorfully displayed on bulletin boards for each class. Written exercises give a very good commentary on the levels reached by individual students and bring the curriculum alive for all to see. Curriculum maps and lesson plans produced by

teachers are being upgraded year by year so that they are increasingly detailed and useful. Teachers have a clear understanding of their accountability.

The school has budgeted well for its educational priorities. Staffing decisions are based on students' needs and information gained from data. Funding for a range of professional development opportunities such as the summer institute accords with the support required for the less experienced teaching staff. Scheduling decisions are determined by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve student outcomes.

The school has a good understanding of the importance of grouping students according to ability and the impact that groupings have on performance. Accelerated classes offer high achieving students the opportunity to boost their performance. The introduction of a performing arts program has done much to build enjoyment in learning and offers students a rich aesthetic experience. For example, a group of students in the second year of learning the cello showed serious determination in reaching the goals marked out by their teacher, and were clearly gaining in self-esteem.

There is much lively and effective teaching in school. Teachers are aware of the needs of individual students and adapt activities accordingly. The school takes account of the different ways in which students learn best and teachers help students to build on what they already know and can do. Relationships are trusting and students readily seek help from their teachers. Much is done to support the personal and social development of students and where necessary, they receive a good level of support from counselors and support staff. At all stages of schooling students are well behaved and high levels of engagement lead to effective learning. The school monitors attendance closely through the application of good procedures.

**Quality Statement 4: 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 principal and the assistant principals work with individual teachers at all levels. They have high expectations and because they work together so effectively and provide good levels of support the school runs very smoothly. Continuous effort goes into the refinement of procedures, the preparation of class materials and the quality of assessments in order to improve student outcomes. The principal is keenly respected for her commitment to the school. She shows strong determination and capacity to effect change.

Procedures for hiring staff are effective in selecting people who show good commitment to the work of the school and are keen to continue to develop professionally. All staff are accountable for learning in their classes and are open to develop further the way they use data to improve instruction.

Professional development is seen as key in the drive to raise the performance of staff and students, and is closely aligned to the school's goals and priorities for improvement. Senior leaders are engaged in a comprehensive program of classroom observation and consider the needs of individual teachers very carefully. The principal and assistant principals know the staff well and are encouraging and helpful. Frank and open discussions help teachers to enhance their skills and to learn from one another.

Teamwork is strong and effective. The school runs regular in-service training and uses the best teachers to model skills on a regular basis. In addition to the training offered at the summer institute, the school has built a strong relationship with Teachers' College to further enhance teachers' professional growth. Overall, teachers support each other exceptionally well, and say that the school is a creative environment in which to work.

There is a good range of support services which support the school's journey towards reaching its goals. Partnerships with community based organizations are well developed. The school participates in a range of initiatives such as Authors' Read Aloud, American Ballroom and Learning Leaders. Students are regularly taken on visits to places of cultural and historical interest to provide enriching experiences and to make learning more meaningful.

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

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school has a secure understanding of how well it is performing because there are suitable, built-in structures for evaluating the school's work. Staff meet regularly through a varied and well-organized team structure, to ensure a constant review of the school's work. Meetings are open and enable staff to engage in honest discussion, to review student progress and to agree on further points of action. The school monitors each student's progress closely and uses the information to measure how much progress the school has made towards reaching its goals. Interim assessments of progress in the plan are made in a variety of ways, for example through regular observation of teaching. The school is responsive to the results of data driven assessments as seen in the recent introduction of the Leap program for grade 2, and the introduction of additional Monday and Saturday programs for grade 4. However, no formal record is made of these interim assessments. Consequently, the information cannot be used in a really focused way to evaluate whether the school has made enough progress and so establish whether it is on track to meet its long-term goals.

School leaders and teachers respond well to the internal data they collect and so are able to realign practices when required to improve students' academic outcomes. The principals and assistant principals have a good understanding of the strengths of individual teachers and ensure that the mathematics coach and two literacy coaches play a valuable role in lending support in the classrooms where required, and in fine tuning the school's programs and instructional methods. As a result, teaching practice is consistent across the school.

The Comprehensive Education Plan accurately reflects the schools' position, and is an effective tool for whole school planning. An overall evaluation of the school's work at the end of each year informs the next year's improvement and action planning.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Grove Hill School (CES 157)</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	