



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Esteban Vicente Elementary School

Public School 170

**1598 Townsend Avenue
Bronx
NY 10452**

Principal: Nancy Ramos

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Reviewer: Alvin Jeffs

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Esteban Vicente Elementary School is a small school that has 251 students enrolled from kindergarten through grade 2. Of the 251 students 18 are special education students and 77 are English language learners. Two-thirds of the students are Hispanic and 30% are Black. Nearly 90% have Title 1 eligibility.

The principal has been in post for two years, having been assistant principal prior to that.

Parental involvement is very high, as is the student attendance rate at 94.5%.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has created an environment which is safe, colorful and welcoming for students and parents alike.
- The school offers all students an unusually imaginative and exciting curriculum.
- Parents feel welcome and as a result support their children and the school very well.
- Students really enjoy their work and respect the support and teaching they receive.
- The skills that teachers bring to their job are outstanding in terms of both their level of expertise and the sensitivity with which they support individual students.
- This sensitivity is backed up by a thoroughgoing use of data and assessment that ensures every student has a work program that suits them.
- The principal's leadership is respected by all and has assisted in the effective introduction of many new and imaginative classroom and enrichment activities.
- The professional development program within the school is very good and has contributed to the professional growth of teachers across the school.
- Attendance rates are higher than the average for New York schools and good procedures are in place to ensure that they remain so.
- Excellent scheduling and staffing arrangements make the very best of the school's budget.

What the school needs to improve

- Find effective ways of comparing the school with similar kindergarten through grade 2 schools to ensure that outcomes are always reviewed in the light of other centers of good practice.
- Ensure that data is analyzed for important sub-groups within the school to ensure that students are benefiting equally from the very good teaching and excellent curricular opportunities.
- Seek to replace the counseling and psychological support that has recently left the school.
- Strengthen the technology curriculum so that students develop the basic skills needed for the effective use of computers.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

Esteban Vicente Elementary School is an outstanding school. Despite its small size and the fact that it caters for the youngest students, it has kept up with, and overtaken in many cases, practices that are recommended for all mainstream schools. There is a wealth of data about each student, including some from external assessments such as the early childhood literacy assessment system. Although for the most part, information is gained by observations and assessments within the classrooms. This means that all decisions are based on a very clear understanding of the impact on the school, the grade and individual students.

Over 80% of staff are new to teaching, but this does not prevent the standard of teaching and student engagement from being very high. Above all, this is a school that has a small budget at its disposal but has retained an exceptionally varied and rich curriculum. These young students have the opportunity to take part in ballet, photography, fencing, percussion and visual arts programs, all taught by professionals. They undertake a wide range of visits and put on performances of a high quality. For a school whose oldest students are seven years old, this is a considerable achievement. However, this happens in parallel with the achievement of very good academic levels, high rates of attendance and receives the strong support from parents who "...only wish that the school continued until grade 5". The partnership between the school and parents is unusually good. The school respects both students and parents. This respect is returned with interest.

The principal demonstrates very good leadership, insisting on the highest expectations of students by staff and parents alike. She lacks the luxury of a cabinet and has only two senior staff through whom to develop new initiatives. This means that all staff are actively and enthusiastically engaged in everything that develops within the school. The high standards are also attributable to the sharp focus that is kept on the core skills of individual students. High quality work is undertaken by the reading teacher who achieves excellent, and well documented, results with well over a half of the students. In addition, skilled work by the speech therapist assists the development of language and literacy skills.

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 proficient.

Students start school with little information on performance apart from alphabetical knowledge. It is one of the school's strengths that it very quickly generates detailed information with regard to skills, performance and attitudes. Each kindergarten teacher uses classroom time for this and creating individual work portfolios, using samples of student work for assessment and comparison. Thus, a process starts that is followed through until the student transfers to the next school.

Each grade carries out assessments on the basis of units of work, spelling quizzes and samples of student reading and writing. This provides data that is current and, thus, valuable whenever a discussion is needed with regard to student targets, grade programs or the success of new initiatives, such as additional reading support. More formal assessments, such as early childhood literacy assessment system, are undertaken at the start, midway and at the end of the school year. In this way benchmarks are provided to ensure that work is suitably adjusted.

The data is overseen by the principal who in regular discussions with teachers ensures individual data feeds into grade and whole-school patterns. Careful attention is paid to sub-groups such as English language learners and special education students. In addition the school keeps a very careful eye on students who are achieving well, so that programs can always be appropriately challenging. It does not monitor trends on the basis of ethnicity as it feels that there are more relevant groupings of students. It is interested in how students who are excessively shy perform, or how students joining the school mid-year achieve and progress.

There are no comparisons made with similar schools, so there is no way of seeing how effective programs are, or how the school performs compared with same age schools. The school is aware of this and is currently seeking schools to compare itself with.

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 detailed data gains in value through its use on a weekly basis. Grade staff meet weekly and with the Australian and United States services in education (AUSSIE) coaches monthly. They discuss programs of work in the light of performance data and issues relating to individual students or groups. Everyone then knows whether a new way of working, such as the writing developments, is successful or not.

These meetings and those with the principal allow class teachers to identify students who are struggling or who might need a greater challenge. Action takes place promptly, whether it is additional reading support or advice from the coach in terms of extension activities. A good example is a student whose speech difficulties were quickly addressed by identifying his interest in cooking. As a result a program was set up where the cooking teacher and speech therapist introduced a cooking course with detailed speech goals.

Data is kept centrally, and shared freely with parents and students. Students have regular conferences with teachers, where their work is discussed and targets identified. This is particularly well done in the area of writing, where each student agrees to two targets that are then placed on their desk top for ready reference. When targets are met they are promptly changed.

In a similar way parents are able to see all of their children’s work and the assessment data at the regular meetings with teachers. In this way, parents say, they are able to understand the school’s high expectations for their child and where their child needs to go next.

Where a student is having significant difficulties an 'intervention plan' is set up with clear targets. These are shared with parents and reviewed. The plans are well detailed and identify a wide range of actions for staff, students and parents.

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

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

The school has a strong arts curriculum, including the visual arts, chorus work and ballet training. Within the 'Peace Builders' program students have the opportunity to focus on good characteristics at the start of the day and in world studies core skills are linked to art, music and dance of different countries.

This is an ambitious curriculum for such a small school and is only possible through very skilled management. Careful budgeting and scheduling mean that dance has been retained by linking it closely to the main curriculum, in topics such as Black history, where Alvin Ailey has figured. Staff meet on a regular basis without students' learning being affected, as the principal hires good substitute teachers at the beginning of the year for the full academic year. Technology is a recognized weakness within the school. Students do not get enough time with computers to give them the basic technology skills they will need when they transition to the next school.

The skills of all the teaching staff contribute to the rich student experiences. Staff teach lessons that have pace and engage their students. Thus, in a kindergarten class looking at the culture of Mexico, the work culminates in great excitement around the making of tortillas.

Attendance is a very high priority in the school and its level exceeds the average for other schools in New York City. The principal introduced rewards for students and parents who contribute well to attendance and promptness. A creative idea which encourages high attendance is the institution of 'Art in the AM', whereby art projects, structured on a weekly basis, are undertaken in all classes between 8:30 and 9:00 am. This makes good use of time for art and ensures that students are keen to arrive on time.

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.

One advantage of having so many teachers new to teaching is their universal willingness to use data as a basis for classroom planning and as evidence for grade discussions. Staff keep running records which give details of the achievement levels of individual students and provide a profile of their sub-skills in English and mathematics. Consequently, the school derives a very clear picture of what is needed in each grade. The recent data collection has highlighted ten implications for teaching, with recommendations such as increasing the amount of writing in all mathematics lessons.

The skills that staff possess have increased significantly as the result of very good professional development, especially from the AUSSIE consultancy team. In addition, observations by the principal and coaches have provided extra advice for classroom

teachers. There is a growing willingness on the part of teachers to visit others classrooms to share best practice.

The close involvement of the principal in observations and one-on-one discussions, means that teachers are responsible for the progress made by their students and professional development is offered where this is not apparent. The principal is largely responsible for the very efficient way in which the school is run. A very good example is the dismissal process, where students not engaged in after-school activities follow a procedure that ensures both safety and orderliness in their home-time routine.

Teachers work well team members showing each other a high degree of trust. Each teacher is willing to share data about their class's overall performance and seek assistance when the information on a particular student indicates a cause for concern. This exchange of information is as strong a process for change as the very good external support and training.

The staff, led by an excellent parent coordinator, make strenuous efforts to link parents to agencies for support within the community. This has become essential since the school lost the services of their psychologist and counselor, making it harder to support students and families.

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.

This is a school where all staff are clear about why data is collected and how to interpret it when collected. Overall strategic planning models this process well. The principal has moved the school forward by developing clear-cut, appropriately resourced plans that are revised in the light of changing circumstances and data produced by class teachers. A good example of the school's responsiveness is their reaction to a recent \$25,000 reduction in funding following a drop in student numbers. Following consultation with staff and parents there was agreement that a number of areas such as supplies should be considered before any thought was given to cutting enrichment activities. The adjustment was made successfully and the curriculum remains as rich as ever.

The school's comprehensive education plan develops in a similarly open way. During May the principal initiates a round of staff and parent surveys to consider how valuable new initiatives have been and how parents view them. From this data, and linked to a close scrutiny of student progress, the success of the previous plan is assessed. The plan is fully implemented in September, but reviewed after Christmas in light of more up-to-date information. In this way the principal ensures that everyone owns the plan and that the plan itself is flexible in its response to new demands and data.

In this small school the communication of data is very good indeed. It starts with regular information on students and moves through to the development of school policy. At the heart of each process is the emphasis on the need for each student to achieve their utmost and for intervention to be provided when this is not the case. Its impact is summed up by one parent who said, "Education is very important to our children and this school gives them what they need."

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Esteban Vicente Elementary School (PS 170)	∅	✓	+
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