



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Public School 197
1250 Ward Avenue
Bronx
NY 10472**

Principal: Ms Grace Formica

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Reviewer: Bill Clark

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS 197 is a pre-kindergarten to 1st grade early childhood school with 588 students. It has a waiting list of 36 students for its pre-kindergarten places. The number of students on roll has risen significantly over the past 3 years and the school is very popular with families in the neighborhood. The school has been Title 1 eligible since 2003-04.

74.2% of students are Hispanic, 22.7% are Black, 2.3% are Asian and others, and 0.9% are White. These proportions have been relatively stable in recent years, although recent immigrants from Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador have begun to increase the proportion of Hispanic students. The school has 60 special education students and 108 English language learners on roll. The school's attendance figures have been slightly below those of similar schools and the City average during each of the last 3 years, and falling in successive years, but have shown some improvement since August 2006.

The school building is shared with 2 elementary schools and most of the students from PS197 progress to one or other of these schools at grade 2. The school describes itself as 'An Early Childhood Learning Environment' that focuses on the NYS and NYC standards, but aims to exceed the minimum required standards for its students'. It implements a creative curriculum framework with an emphasis on developing the whole child through activities such as art, music, and movement, visits to museums and other external places of interest, as well as delivering the early years curriculum for literacy and mathematics. The focus is on developing the individual child.

The principal has been in post for 3 years. There has been a significant turnover of teachers during that time, resulting in many teachers being in post for 1 to 3 years. Parents support and are very active in the school and the school has developed a wide range of partnerships in the community and with other organizations.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is an outstanding instructional leader who demands high standards and has high expectations of staff and students, but is sensitive, compassionate and an enthusiastic motivator of both staff and students.
- All staff have very high expectations of students which go beyond the minimum standards.
- There is a strong sense of unity, collegiality, and trust among teachers, administrators and the principal which ensures that teachers are well supported and feel empowered and valued in their work.
- Teaching and learning throughout the school is based upon an enriched Creative Curriculum Framework that engages and stimulates all students, including special education, ELL and gifted and talented students.
- Extensive use is made of student assessment data at student, class and whole-school levels to inform and adjust school goals.
- The school works closely and successfully with parents in implementing strategies to develop their children through the enriched curriculum and the very strong parent involvement program.
- All classrooms are very well resourced with appropriate learning materials to meet the needs of all students.
- There is a high standard of classroom displays that create stimulating learning environments throughout the school, including a science laboratory that is excellent for promoting learning through inquiry for this age range.
- The school has a very positive culture, promoted by the principal and embraced by staff, students and parents – a very real sense of community.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the good use of data to inform decision-making by implementing a small number of additional analyses of data, including attendance data, for sub-groups of students.
- Continue to explore and develop opportunities to further extend the use of technology to support teaching and learning.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

Under the inspirational leadership of the current principal, the school has developed over the last 3 years into an early childhood school that focuses on NYS and NYC standards. Instruction is age and developmentally appropriate and focuses on the social, emotional and cognitive domains of early childhood development. The school uses a balanced literacy approach to reading, with a strong emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, and developmental writing. The Everyday Mathematics program ensures that instruction is focused on both skills and constructing understanding through the use of manipulatives, cooperative learning, exploration, and problem solving. Differentiated and individualized instruction is used to support all learners at all stages in the school.

The staff, many of whom are recent recruits, have embraced the principal's philosophy of early childhood education and, building on her expertise, deliver a high quality experience for all the students. The teachers are a dedicated group of people, committed to improvement and high expectations and very well supported by a range of skilled administrators and academic intervention staff. The school has a positive ethos of high achievement and is a welcoming and nurturing environment for young learners. There is a very real and visible partnership between teachers, parents, and students who consistently work well together to ensure the good progress of the children.

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.

Building on the extensive gathering of data on individual students at classroom level, the school has developed systematic and comprehensive processes of data gathering and analysis. In addition to mandated data processes such as ECLAS 2, Princeton Review and NYSESLAT, teachers have developed a student assessment monitoring system (SAMS) that uses an impressive range of techniques such as class snapshots, intervention lists for students at risk in literacy/mathematics, detailed AIS class summaries, reading level tracking sheets, observation grids and conference notes, and benchmarking. Many of the instruments used have been designed by the teachers themselves and are closely aligned to the needs of children in the early years range.

The SAMS process was introduced in pre-kindergarten and grade 1 in 2005-6 and has now been reviewed and extended into kindergarten. It contains a large amount of data for each child and incorporates individual and class based aggregated data in reading, writing and mathematics. Pre-kindergarten teachers are currently refining their SAMS binders to focus on student oral language acquisition. The contents of the SAMS binders are the subject of regular meetings between administrators and individual teachers that focus on student progress. In addition, ECLAS action plans are written for identified groups of students and

implemented by teachers. Student progress is regularly reviewed by the administration in collaboration with AIS teachers, consultants and classroom teachers. The AIS program is data driven and is a highly collaborative process. Consultants monitor the program and provide quality feedback to the AIS teachers. Some tracking of ELL students has also been undertaken, including a brief analysis and reflection on PS 197 students who are now experiencing difficulty in grade 2 in the two elementary schools that share the building with PS 197.

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 collection and analysis of student performance data is very effective. The principal, the cabinet, and consultants regularly review the data in the SAMS binders with individual teachers in order to identify and plan strategies for individuals and groups of students. The monitoring of progress is very efficient and effective, and teachers are particularly skilled at using the outcomes of these meetings to adjust their teaching strategies in the classroom.

The contribution of the academic intervention specialists/literacy coaches and the AUSSIE consultants to this process is excellent in supporting teachers and students as they focus on individual students’ needs. They are also effective in supporting teachers’ high expectations of what students can achieve. The school looks closely at the minimum standards expected of students in kindergarten and 1st grade and sets ambitious targets that are considerably above these minimum standards. These are kept under constant review by the cabinet working with classroom teachers.

Parents are regularly informed of the progress of their children in a clear, unambiguous way so that they understand how they can contribute to the next stages of their learning. The school’s parent involvement program includes a range of activity-based opportunities for parents to meet in a dedicated parents’ room and the program also includes workshop classes designed to help parents understand the curriculum, instructional processes and their children’s progress in the school.

At the start of each school year, the school leaders meet with all the teachers to identify issues arising from analysis of the previous year’s student performance data and their experience of the year in order to plan and implement strategies for the coming year. These strategies are carefully monitored throughout the year and, using emerging data from the SAMS process, adjustments made where necessary to ensure their continuing effectiveness.

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 developed literacy, curriculum maps, specifically tailored to meet the needs of the range of students, over the last 3 years. The maps are used well and are rigorously reviewed at regular intervals.

The school has increased AIS teacher allocation and these teachers give additional support to classroom teachers as literacy coaches. They, along with the AUSSIE consultants, play a key role in supporting and challenging classroom teachers to ensure that resources are well matched to instructional activity in order to meet the high expectations the school has of its students. Funds have also been used to support a focus on the social and emotional curriculum. The recruitment and deployment of teachers is driven by the need to match the needs of students. Relationships between students and teachers are exemplary.

The school is well resourced and it is clear that budgeting decisions support the goals of improving student learning outcomes by allocating funds to text purchases, classroom literacy materials, mathematics and science. One area in which the school is relatively under-resourced is in technology, although the principal is planning to develop this further over the next 2 years.

Specific after school intervention programs have been developed and additional teacher support is provided through the mandated extended time program and in designated classrooms during the timetabled literacy block. These programs supplement the work carried out in the basic curriculum, engage students throughout the school and have a very positive impact on learning. The arts program was introduced in 2003 and includes the Alvin Ailey for Kids Dance Program, Studio in a School, LEAP and the Suzuki violin-tutoring program. The Gifted and Talented Program was started in Region 2 in 2004-05. In the first year students from PS197 were awarded 6 of the 25 available places, rising to 12 of the 25 places in 2005-06.

Students are enthusiastic and immersed in the learning process throughout the school. Attendance is slightly below that of similar schools and, although non attendance is followed up swiftly on a daily basis and is a high priority for the school, more could be done to analyze aggregated data which may provide some insights into patterns of absences.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan forms the basis for professional development opportunities and at the start of the school year, all school staff reflected on their personal roles in achieving the stated school goals at individual, grade and whole school levels. This process continues throughout the year, supplemented by peer evaluation, inter-visitations, study groups, learning walks and mentoring programs, including a buddy system. The principal and assistant principal frequently visit classrooms making formal and informal judgments about development needs on the basis of evidence and data.

The cabinet, including the principal, meets weekly to consider the over-arching issues for teachers, the curriculum and other key areas, based on data emerging from the regular formal and informal meetings with teachers. This group regularly reviews each teacher's assessment binder and, in collaboration with teachers, identifies professional development needs.

Funds have been allocated for additional teacher time and resources for professional development such as prep periods and study group texts. Professional development libraries are provided for each teacher as well as opportunities to attend a wide range of

seminars and workshops to improve instruction. The principal, who is highly regarded by all staff, is an excellent communicator who ensures that all staff are constantly moving forward with ambitious high expectations. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to the school's philosophy and go the extra mile to devote out of school time to personal professional development.

There are excellent contributions of family workers, who monitor attendance at each grade and conduct home visits. Social workers who provide support for the social and emotional development of students experiencing difficulty transitioning from home to school. The regular formal and informal observations by administrators provide feedback to teachers on improving instruction, and a range of inter-visitations, teacher mentor programs, and common preps all contribute to the comprehensive and consistent process of improving and aligning instruction using available data.

Partnerships with community-based organizations have been developed in order to increase parent involvement. The school has live partnerships with, for example, Bank Street College Center for Emotionally Responsive Practice, Every Person Influences Children (EPIC), American Red Cross, Children's Advocacy Center, Hilltop Research and Cornell University. Local partnerships to increase student awareness and involvement in the arts include LEAP, Studio in a School, and the Alvin Ailey for Kids Dance Program.

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.

The processes for monitoring individual students' progress throughout the year are well developed and embedded in the daily work of all staff. Diagnostic assessment is regular and detailed at the individual student level and results in rapid adjustments to instruction where necessary. There is a clear process of monitoring, adjusting, further monitoring and evaluating throughout the year, with annual evaluations informing the following year's goals and plans.

For example, in the AIS reading intervention program initial diagnostic assessments are conducted and children are grouped according to these assessments. Interim goals are set and AIS teachers' work collaboratively with classroom teachers to provide differentiated instruction. Group work, differentiated to meet the needs of individual and groups of students across the curriculum, is a very clear strength of this school. Goals are reviewed throughout the year based on progress assessments and instruction adjusted accordingly.

The AIS reading intervention program, the regular SAMS meetings, and child case study team (CCST) meetings combine to ensure that this aspect of the school's monitoring and evaluation processes are effective, relevant and result in a flexible approach to realigning practices and resources on an ongoing basis.

Further development of the process is possible, related to wider whole-school comparisons but, given the highly appropriate focus on the individual for this age group, this further development would add a degree of sophistication to what already exists rather than addressing a fundamental weakness in the process.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 197 (PS 197)	∅	✓	+
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