



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Empowerment School 209**

**Public School 209**

**317 East 183 Street  
Bronx  
NY 10458**

**Principal: Jacquelyn Cannon**

**Dates of review: April 26 – 27, 2007**

**Reviewer: Kath Wood**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Empowerment school 209 is an early childhood school educating 210 students from pre-kindergarten to second grade. Originally the school was for kindergarten students only but has grown to its current status during the last few years. This is only the second year that there have been grade 2 students enrolled. The students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds including Hispanic at 65%, Black 28%, White 1%, Asian and others at 2% and students who have no ethnicity recorded at 4%. Around 18% of the students are English language learners and most have Spanish as their first language. There are currently less than 10% of the students who have special education needs and they are taught either in a special class or included, with support, in general education. Title 1 eligibility, at around 89% and attendance, currently at around 94%, are higher than that found in similar and City schools.

This is an Empowerment School. Empowerment Schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources of the school community. Empowerment Schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is recognized by the whole school community as a dynamic leader with a clear vision for continuous improvement.
- The school uses data very effectively to monitor and track student progress.
- There are high aspirations and expectations for both the academic and personal development of all students.
- Collaborative teamworking across the school is excellent.
- Creative budgeting and resource management ensures that all teachers and students have all that they need to teach and learn successfully.
- The curriculum is well selected, effectively monitored and evaluated closely to inform teaching and learning.
- Professional development is a high priority and is led and managed well to ensure positive impact on student learning.
- There are excellent relationships across the school between adults and students.
- Systems and structures are firmly embedded into school life to ensure smooth running and continual improvement.
- Parents feel welcomed into the school and appreciate their close contact with administrators and all staff.

### What the school needs to improve

- Build on teachers' interest and excitement in data use to devise tracking systems for other areas of the curriculum.
- Prioritize school goals into short, medium and longer term targets with clear start and completion timescales.
- Find creative ways to assist parents in understanding data.
- Extend data disaggregation to research the progress of a wider range of student groups who are of interest to the school.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

Empowerment School 209 places student achievement at the top of its agenda. The staff team has worked successfully together to build an attractive and purposeful learning environment, sharing high expectations for themselves as well as for their students. There is a good emphasis on students' social and emotional development and on their literacy and mathematical skills. As a result, students are confident, well motivated learners who work hard and enjoy the varied experiences that the school provides for them.

The school collects a significant range of data about each student and has developed very effective assessments, monitoring procedures and tracking systems to make sure that each individual is supported in making good progress. As a result, all student groups are achieving well. Relationships are very strong, both within school and with parents and the wider community creating a positive, mutually supportive teamworking approach. The administrative team is particularly strong, has a clear, shared vision for continuous improvement and has established the systems and structures that will enable the school to continue to develop successfully.

### 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 an extensive range of assessment data which is very well organized to provide administrators and teachers with a quick overview of what each student knows and can do by class, grade and subject. This information is closely analyzed to note any trends and patterns in the performance of individuals, groups, classes and grades and also to monitor and inform curriculum programs. The progress of different groups of students, including ethnic groups, English language learners and students with special education needs is reviewed by the administration team and specialist support staff and fed back into classroom tracking systems to inform both instructional practice and curriculum programs. The school also monitors other groups of interest to ensure that all students, for example, gifted and talented students are provided with all they need to make good progress. These well embedded systems, which are used consistently across the school, mean that all students have appropriate challenge or support to meet their specific needs. As a result, all individuals and groups do well.

Tracking systems for English language arts, monitoring both skills progression and knowledge and understanding of the subject, are particularly effective and the school intends to use the structures to further develop other curriculum areas. All staff are interested in and excited by the power of data in consistently improving their teaching and plan to extend their study group processes to look even more closely at trends and patterns in performance between other sub-groups. For example, although no specific trends are noted in results of gender analysis, administrators are eager to research the

different learning styles of boys and girls in different subjects so that they can adapt their instruction accordingly.

As the school is pre-k to grade 2, no City or State comparators are readily available to monitor school progress. Administrators however, monitor school progress against other local and network schools and use backmapping information to provide data about their students in comparison with their peers in other schools. Careful records are kept to demonstrate, and build year-on-year information for all students.

**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.**

Collaboration and teamworking are very strong across the school. The good data collection systems enable administrators to set clear goals for improvement for individuals, groups and classes and to ensure that the appropriate support structures are in place. The grade teams, each with their own lead teacher, work closely to analyze ongoing data within their grade but also work supportively across the grades to collect information about whole school or subject specific targets. Consequently, a comprehensive picture about the needs of each student in all subjects is created for both immediate and long term goals. As a result of this process during last year, the school was able to identify that the progress of English language learners was not fast enough and that their gifted and talented students needed extended challenge in their reading. Both of these issues have subsequently been addressed in the Comprehensive Education Plan.

All school goals have clear benchmarking structures and identify the next steps required for students to achieve success. All students in need are identified during the monthly intervention meetings and have a six week cycle of support as appropriate for that individual, for example, reading recovery, writing skills or one-to-one support for those students at risk. The monthly meetings allow for extension of the specific programs or changes in support level if required.

All school staff have very high expectations for their own performance and have high aspirations for all the students in their classes. These expectations are shared with the students and with their parents and caregivers, leading to strong ‘can-do’ attitudes demonstrated by all adults and students. The open door policy is highly appreciated by parents who feel that they are welcome to discuss their child’s progress very regularly with teachers and have good quality information provided in newsletters, e-mails, notes and on the school website. The administration is eager to extend their parent workshop opportunities by developing creative ways to teach parents how to understand data so that they can further support their children at home. The strong teamworking approach to school development and improvement extends to parents and the wider community, driving their activity.

**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 selected the curriculum with great care, using data very effectively to confirm those choices. For example, although a new math scheme has been adopted, a curriculum map illustrates where other schemes complement and extend skills and knowledge so that all students have the opportunity to re-visit or extend topics and themes as appropriate. There is a pacing and curriculum planner for each curriculum subject, all of which are regularly evaluated and revised in the light of data analysis. The school is presently reviewing the science curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of all groups of students. Enrichment subjects offered to the students include art, technology, health and movement and social studies and the principal intends to include dance and music as soon as a cluster teacher is available. Teachers plan carefully to provide lessons that are interesting and engaging for their classes.

Teachers are held accountable for improving their instruction and student outcomes initially by their own high expectations for themselves but also through the good systems within the school for data management and tracking. Student data is used carefully to plan differentiated work to meet the needs of individuals and groups and to respond to school goals and targets. Budgeting, staffing and scheduling are effectively and creatively driven by data. The principal and teachers are very skilled in accessing additional funds to make sure that resources are high quality and provide everything that is required to deliver the curriculum effectively. In addition, flexible scheduling supports gifted and talented students who benefit from inclusion in grades above their own for reading lessons. Relationships throughout the school are very strong and positive. Teachers speak very warmly about their classes and students report that their teachers really care about them and their learning. They are confident that there is always someone there for them if they need help or support. As a result, attendance figures are high and students respond positively to the many reward systems and good monitoring strategies that are in place.

**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 team works closely together to interview and hire new staff. Expectations are made clear right from the start as to what skills and abilities are required and how school data systems are central to teaching and learning. Staff share that they have very honest conversations with each other about their instructional practice in grade and whole school teams. School leaders, including the grade team leaders constantly and consistently monitor teaching to improve practice, providing valuable feedback. Teachers have regular opportunities for intervisitations and even new teachers feel confident about providing feedback to their peers and even their lead teachers.

Professional development is afforded very high priority in response to classroom observation, evaluation of student tracking data, whole school identified needs and opportunities for study group research. Data analysis identified a need for a more focused approach to improving the skills of English language learner students so the school organized a study group to research and develop strategies that can be implemented across the school. This has resulted in significant improvement in results for this group.

Teachers are encouraged to identify their own training needs and interests and these are carefully built into the professional development program which includes lab sites, external consultancy, workshops and courses. A wide range of external partnerships support both the professional development program and achievement of academic goals. These include ENACT for behavior management strategies, AUSSIE consultants, LINC literacy for parents alongside relationships with Bronx Zoo, Donors Choose, the Botanical Gardens and Theaterworks USA. All these partnerships enrich student experiences and support the school in their drive to continuous improvement.

The experienced and very effective assistant principal and coach support the lead teachers within the regular and well organized planning teams. Meetings take place very frequently and have clear data driven agendas. Student progress is carefully tracked, assessment binders are monitored and interventions are prepared to meet the needs of each student or group.

**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 Comprehensive Education Plan provides an extensive analysis of the goals to be achieved and the actions required to meet them. The plan is constructed collaboratively by all staff and the leadership team to ensure ownership of the areas of focus. Targets are realistic, grounded in data analysis and have specific action plans and resources identified for each theme. Progress is monitored at monthly intervals so that any required adjustments can be made in a timely fashion. The school recognizes the value of re-defining school goals into short, medium and longer term objectives with clear start and end timescales in order to focus their efforts more specifically.

Teachers use data tracking very successfully to monitor student progress and provide the necessary interventions. Individual, class and grade goals are consistently monitored with formal monthly meetings in place to review and revise programs, support strategies and student groupings. Staff work closely in grade teams and also across grades to create benchmarking data and to work on curriculum developments to respond to identified needs. As a result, school plans and goals are consistently reviewed and modified as appropriate.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Empowerment School 209 (PS 209)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<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