



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The School of Science and Applied Learning

Community School 300

2050 Prospect Avenue

Bronx

NY 10457

Principal: Ms Vanessa Singleton

Dates of review: January 29 - 30, 2007

Reviewer: Eileen Hill

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Community School 300 is an elementary school with approximately 600 students enrolled. The school is one of five in a large building and it shares some facilities, such as the gymnasium, with the other schools. The school was opened as a new school 18 months ago following the closure of the existing school in the same location. Most teachers transferred from the closed school to the new one. Since the new school was opened, there have been two principals, the most recent in post for only four months.

The majority of students (52%) are Hispanic and almost all others are Black. Almost one third of students leaves or enters the school other than at the beginning of the school year. There are only just over 6% of special education students but 20% of students are English language learners. The school is eligible for Title 1 funding for 100% of its students. This figure is much higher than for similar and other City schools.

The school identifies overcrowding in the building as a significant barrier to improvement.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is well organized and efficient.
- The behavior and well-being of students is managed successfully.
- Attendance has improved significantly during this academic year and is now over 90%.
- Liaison and communication with parents have improved significantly.
- The new principal has very good leadership skills and has made considerable improvements to the tone and climate of the school in a short time.
- The literacy and mathematics coaches offer strong support to teachers for improving planning and teaching.
- The academic intervention teachers and other consultants are used effectively to raise academic achievement and support special education students.
- The school fully implements the mandated curriculum.
- The marking and assessment of students' written work is constructive and regularly sets next steps for learning.
- Planning for improvement is based on measurable targets and plans are regularly monitored and reviewed.

What the school needs to improve

- Make use of data to analyze and understand the performance and progress of ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students and boys and girls.
- Ensure that goals and plans focus on improving the performance of individual students.
- Enable teachers to fully understand how to assess the learning needs of individual students and how to plan for their progress.
- Give sufficient attention to ensuring a balance of high quality instruction across the grades in the school.
- Focus professional development for teachers and other staff on the specific needs of individuals.
- Increase the school's involvement in partnerships with the community.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal is effective and has made remarkable progress in her four months in post. Under her leadership, the school has set itself realistic goals for improvement. Teachers are beginning to keep data on the progress of students in their classes. The curriculum has been aligned to the needs of the students to address the low levels of achievement in literacy and mathematics. The fears and anxieties of parents have been allayed and parents are now committed to the school and respect and endorse the principal. The newly appointed English language arts and mathematics coaches are making a difference to the quality of planning, instruction and assessment in the school. Intervention teachers are used well to support the academic needs of the students.

There is still much to be done. Teachers do not yet focus sufficiently on the learning needs of individuals and the quality of instruction is not consistently good across the grades. Teachers are not yet held accountable for the progress of students in their classes. However, the principal has long-term plans for bringing about improvements which are not yet fully implemented. The staff and students trust and respect the principal and there is a climate of openness and trust. The school is making good progress.

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.

The school uses a variety of data, including that generated by teacher assessments, to understand the performance and progress of individuals, classes and grade levels. This data is beginning to be used by teachers to plan instruction to meet the needs of its students, but this is at an early stage. The focus on data is relatively new and the school has yet to analyze and compare the progress of groups, including the main ethnic groups in the school, English language learners and special education students. The school is acutely aware of the poor achievement of its students and the principal and her administration now actively gather data on students' achievements and are preparing to review progress at the mid point of the year. The data, particularly that from the Princeton Review, suggest some progress has been made in raising achievement over the first term of the year in English language arts and mathematics.

Assessment data is gathered on the large number of students who enter the school after the beginning of the academic year, but the school has not yet considered how to monitor the progress of such students in comparison with others. It is not possible for the school to compare its performance in comparison to similar schools because it has not been open long enough for such data to be available. Data on attendance is used well to monitor and improve attendance rates.

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 proficient.

The principal, in collaboration with staff and parents, has developed relevant plans and goals based on an analysis of the school’s needs and on past and present assessments of students’ achievements. The overall goals for the year are clear; some are objectively measurable. Goals relate to improvements in achievement, attendance, professional development for staff, better communications with parents, improved use of intervention support services and more parental involvement in the life and work of the school. While all members of the school community share in the principal’s vision for a better school and know and understand the main plans for improvement, goal-setting by teachers at the level of individuals and groups within their classrooms is not yet systematic. Teachers do not yet measure their own performance in terms of how the students in their classes achieve.

The principal recognizes that while expectations are generally high through grades 3 to 5, those conveyed to students and parents in kindergarten through grade 2 are too low. The focus for improvement has been on the older students in the first months of this year in order to prepare them for their State tests. The principal has established common planning time for each grade to bring about greater consistency across the school and has plans to strengthen the overall quality of instructional programs over the course of the school year.

Goals and plans for improving the performance of students do, nevertheless, drive the activity of all member of the school and this is evident in the displays of students’ work and the rewards they receive for achieving high marks in tests and other assessments. Data gathered on special education students is used to assess their needs and involve appropriate services. As a result, there has been a significant fall in the number of students referred for special education this year so far, as compared with the previous year.

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 proficient.

Since the beginning of this academic year, the school has made many significant changes in order to align instruction to the needs of the students. Since levels of literacy are low throughout the school, the focus of instructional activity has been on improving reading and writing. Teachers in all grades have concentrated on developing students’ writing skills. Last year, students in kindergarten did not learn to write, but this year all students are learning how to develop or improve writing skills.

The school is now implementing fully the mandated curriculum for all its students, but teachers do not yet base their planning and instruction on the learning needs of individuals or groups within a class. This means that the level of challenge to students is not always appropriate. Older students are generally engaged by instruction. Although all students are well behaved, some younger students are not fully interested and motivated by their lessons. Staff know and respect the students in their care and the principal knows each

student by name. Students generally trust adults and know they will get support if they need it.

Budgeting decisions are based on improving instruction. Instructional schemes for teaching phonics and schemes for teaching balanced literacy have been purchased and are used by all teachers. Lively and up-to-date reading books and leveled libraries are provided for students in each classroom. A new mathematics scheme has been purchased and this too is now used by all teachers. Scheduling decisions this year have been based on teachers' preferences and most teach in the grade that they have become familiar with. Insufficient attention is given to ensuring a balance of high quality instruction across the grades.

Attendance is a priority for the school. Since the appointment of the new principal, attendance has risen to over 90% as compared with 88% for the autumn term in the previous year. Absences are followed up systematically by telephone calls or home visits.

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 proficient.

The principal has had limited opportunities to appoint new teachers. She has appointed English language arts and mathematics coaches who are successful in bringing about improvements in the quality of teachers' planning, instruction and assessment. She has also taken on experienced additional intervention teachers who provide effective support to those students in greatest need and those who have not made the required progress.

Professional development focuses on the school's main goals for the year, although there is insufficient attention given, at present, to the needs of individual teachers. Common planning meetings are sometimes led by the coaches and used effectively as opportunities for staff training. Teachers are beginning to observe each other's lessons and to learn from the good practice that exists in the school. Professional development is making a difference to the quality of instruction, particularly in grades 3 to 5. Lessons are observed frequently by the principal, some formally and others informally. She has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers and provides positive and constructive feedback to them to help them to improve.

The climate in the school is one of trust and openness. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The principal is respected by all members of the school community and has good capacity to effect change.

The school liaises well with youth development and support services for its students. The extent of partnerships with outside bodies is limited and an area that the school plans to develop.

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 proficient.

The principal has a schedule for implementing, evaluating and revising the school's goals and has been successful in her plans for the first half of the school year, achieving a very great deal in a short time. The school has collected some data on the progress and achievement of students within and across classrooms and is aware of where classes are succeeding or falling behind, and which teachers are more or less successful in ensuring students reach the required standards. This data is not yet used systematically to hold teachers accountable for the level of progress in their classes, but on a whole-school level, it is used to evaluate where progress has been made and to revise plans.

Teachers are not yet proficient in setting goals for their classes which focus on improvements in achievement, but they do respond to students' work constructively and encourage them to improve by setting next steps in learning.

At present the school has only interim outcomes for the first half of the year and is about to review and evaluate what it has achieved in order to realign its plans and goals. The next stage of implementation is intended to focus more directly on the consistency of quality across the grades and on establishing better procedures for assessing and monitoring the progress of individual students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The School of Science and Applied Learning (CS 300)	∅	✓	+
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	