



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Public School 340
25 West 195 Street
Bronx
NY 10468**

Principal: Deirdre Burke

Dates of review: May 14 - 15, 2007

Reviewer: Christine Sibley

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 340 is an elementary school for pre-kindergarten through grade 6. It has an enrollment of 551 students. Approximately 77% are Hispanic, 14% Black, 2% White, and 7% Asian and students from other backgrounds. Fifteen percent are special needs students and 25% are English language learners. The proportion of English language learners is higher than similar and City schools

The principal and assistant principal have been in post since the school opened, in a new, purpose built building, 8 years ago. The accommodation is wheelchair accessible but does not have an auditorium or gymnasium. The pre-kindergarten class opened this academic year.

As 89% of students are eligible for a free or reduced lunch, which is 2% lower than similar schools but 17% higher than the City average, the school receives Title 1 funding. At almost 94%, attendance is above similar and City school averages.

This is an empowerment school. Empowerment schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their 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

- Systems for the continuous and consistent use of data collection, analysis and subsequent action are well embedded across the school.
- The principal is respected as a highly committed and instructional leader who provides both continual challenge and support for the whole school community.
- The assistant principal's well focused and timely work on attendance, time keeping and student welfare significantly contributes to the high levels of student attendance and progress.
- Students are eager and confident, speaking clearly of their own progress.
- An effective focus on skills for life and character development promotes a strong tone of mutual respect across the school community.
- The progress made by English language learners is effectively enhanced by school driven data-led instruction that ensures students reach grade level in their first language prior to transferring to monolingual classes.
- Action research is successfully utilized to investigate and develop strategies for identified areas for improvement.
- Effective collaborative planning is enabled by devolved leadership, teacher accountability and consistently high expectations for all students.

What the school needs to improve

- Further refine the analysis of data by ethnic group and gender to identify good practice and trends over time.
- Provide parents with clear and concise information on school improvement goals for the year.
- Formalize the collection of data from the middle and high schools on the achievements of former students.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The development of character and high academic achievement are central to everything the school does and are reflected in improving and above average test scores, and the confident way students take responsibility and interact with each other and adults. The tone of seeking continuous improvement is driven by the principal. She is clear in her aims as well as flexible and creative in seeking opportunities to align funds, resources and staffing to meet identified goals. School data shows year-on-year improvements to instruction and curriculum planning. Students receive well-targeted differentiation and interventions, which enables the majority of students to achieve at or above grade level.

Detailed analysis of school data drives the school's Comprehensive Education Plan which is clear, concise and accessible to all school staff, enabling effective collaborative work to achieve the agreed goals. The school's emphasis on collaborative work extends to students and their families who are supported in taking ownership of learning. The strong links that the school builds continue as ex-students report back on their achievements at middle and high school.

This school is currently engaged in a research project to design its own periodic assessment materials.

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 systematically built on its use of standardized test scores to establish a wide range of relevant school data which matches closer to its instruction. Detailed and consistent data collected at student, class and grade level shows incremental progress for all pupils, which is verified by good test results. Teachers' binders, student portfolios and discussions at grade and cabinet meetings contribute to a clear picture of the needs and achievements of all students, enabling regular and close scrutiny of student progress both short- and long-term. Goals for progress are set which are both realistic and challenging.

Assessment on admission uses standardized tests and school assessments, which include work samples that provide a baseline for a portfolio that is continued through the school. Systems are consistent enabling all teachers to use and add to the data in order to improve and differentiate instruction and evaluate impact. Analysis of school-based data identified the need to develop systems of immediate intervention for new students who have been out of school or who have been enrolled at a number of previous schools and attended poorly. As a relatively new school, and a school of choice, such students are regularly enrolled. The school uses its own assessments and data to act speedily and effectively to support these students. Where necessary the school takes action in advance of formal intervention. For example, the formulation and implementation of an effective individualized education plan while a referral for special needs assessment and services is

being made. Detailed tracking of both English language learners and special education students provides evidence of consistently good progress.

In addition to the use of prior and City data, the network of empowerment schools is used for comparative data on achievement and attendance. There is no analysis yet of school generated data by ethnicity or gender. Every student is seen as an individual who can succeed, regardless of background. However, this does not allow for trends over time to be identified or good practice to be shared for these groupings of 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.

Staff work collaboratively to agree the school’s goals for continued improvement. Precise formats and calendars for school systems such as meetings, teacher binders, progress tracking and conferencing are embedded in day-to-day practice. They are followed consistently, driving the whole school community and exemplifying the high standards expected of students and teachers. A comprehensive system of review ensures that the short- and long-term goals agreed for the school and for individual students, classes and grades are appropriately challenging and enable outcomes to be verified and shared across the school. Action plans have strong cross-curricular links, further supporting collaboration. Goals are shared with students and measured for success against their progress. As a result, the school knows when its actions have been effective.

The school makes sure the progress of students who need most support to learn is tracked closely. Where data highlighted a decline in the rate of progress in reading at 3rd grade, teacher-led action research identified student vocabulary as the key barrier to accessing the curriculum. An action plan was devised which included resources, lesson structure and the creation of a “robust vocabulary”. As a result, a high proportion of students now achieve levels 3 and 4.

Parents are clear about their children’s personal goals. In addition to parent conferences and meetings, reading calendars are sent home giving clear information on the purpose of work, which books are being used and how this extends into writing. Parents describe how this information enables them to understand and support their children’s daily homework. There are well-established procedures for rewarding good effort as well as achievement.

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 curriculum, which is aligned to the mandated curriculum, generates meaningful quantitative and qualitative data. Student achievement beyond test results is strongly emphasized and effectively underpins the curriculum. Information is collected on the progress of students at middle and high school. This is not a formalized structure that allows the school to usefully evaluate its effectiveness over a longer-term.

Vocabulary work includes learning specific words to enable all students to fully access and participate in the broad curriculum on offer. Lead teachers, coaches and consultants work cohesively across and within classes to provide instructional support and timely intervention. For example, the reading recovery teacher works with the grade 1 teachers to identify students who are not making sufficient progress. There is detailed tracking of all targeted students through to 4th grade when data indicates all are at or above grade level.

All teachers are actively engaged in realigning and differentiating instruction. They are empowered to use their judgment to amend student groupings, and the allocation of additional support and resources. This results in high levels of student engagement. Teachers understand that with empowerment comes direct responsibility for the progress of their students and so class and grade monitoring systems are fully embedded. The roles of teachers are interlocking, with specialists and cabinet members covering class and supporting school-wide initiatives as required. This further develops the school's consistency of approach and quality of instruction.

The principal ensures that the school's budget is maximized and, with the cabinet, realigns the budget and staffing effectively to ensure goals are met. The resources needed to achieve the agreed goals are made readily available. Interventions for English language learners and special education students are weighted towards pre-kindergarten through 2nd grade. These class sizes have been reduced. Well-targeted after-school support provides an additional layer of instruction for special education students, maximizing their engagement in class. Students at minimum proficiency and Level 2 now receive services from the academic intervention team.

Students are confident and engaged. Carefully structured classroom planning and organization enables all students to take turns in leading the first lesson in every class. There is an active student government. Students feel their contributions are valued and acted upon and are confident to ask for help and support from adults when necessary. Each year, all students give presentations to their class and parents on their progress, using their portfolios and other work they may choose.

Student attendance is a high priority. The role of the assistant principal in ensuring that parents are active partners in their child's education begins pre-admission with meetings and support offered. Her proactive approach to attendance and time keeping makes a significant contribution, particularly in improving the attendance and punctuality of students with discontinuity of schooling.

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 principal is strongly committed to the devolution of leadership in order to align school improvement as close as possible to instruction, thereby maximizing impact. This includes supporting and developing paraprofessionals. When recruiting new teachers, practical tasks, including data analysis, and observations of instruction are included in the selection process as routine, resulting in all teachers sharing the school's high expectations and having the skills they need to evaluate student performance and progress.

An established program of coaching, with feedback and refinements made during the lesson, enables teachers to fine tune their instruction as the lesson progresses. For example, a teacher will implement immediately suggestions on where to stand in the room

and how to phrase questions while the coach notes changes in student engagement. Teachers are supported further by a precisely scheduled professional development program, tightly linked to both the school goals and their own self-identified needs.

Grade meetings revise reading calendars and pacing schedules in the light of identified student need and outcomes from professional development, and when opportunities arise, such as the availability of new resources. The devolution of leadership enables all teachers to become a “lead teacher” sharing good practice and undertaking classroom visitations and observations across the school within the focus of agreed goals. The principal regularly observes classes, noting any variations in agreed standards and acknowledging good practice. She is respected by the whole school community for her clarity of focus and ability “to make things happen”.

Both students and parents speak well of the high level of school safety and the tone of mutual respect that adds to the very smooth running of the school. Partnerships with groups such as the Creative Arts Team, an annual circus residency and sports facilities at Apex College are effectively linked to the curriculum and further enrich student learning.

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.

Clear and precise school information and data on individual students, classes and grades for the previous years informs the Comprehensive Education Plan and drives all aspects of the school’s work. The principal devolves the leadership of key aspects of the plan to teachers based on specific tasks which have clear timeframes and are systematically monitored and reviewed. They are an integral part of the process of implementation. Opportunities for all teachers to contribute to and evaluate progress towards agreed goals are a routine part of school organization. The principal has modified the Comprehensive Education Plan, aligning it with her principal performance review, to provide clarity and focus for all staff. However, while parents are given some information, they do not have a clear picture of the Comprehensive Education Plan goals.

Monitoring systems provide all teachers with shared terminology, methods of working, and opportunities for calibration that further reinforce the school’s high expectations as well as systematically reviewing and refining implementation strategies. Grade meetings include all teachers who have contact with the students. They review the progress of individuals in detail and revise plans to improve instruction. Technology is utilized to support data collection and analysis in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten where teachers use palmtops with structured word banks to enable shared and systematic recording and assessment at the point of learning. Sufficient meeting time has been created by a “make every minute count” review of the day to ensure systems are sustainable and thorough. This strong framework enables teachers to work directly on fine tuning instruction to improve individual student’s progress and also to have a clear understanding of improvements across the school. These systems are well established and self managing. They enable the principal to monitor and review, make comparisons across classes and grades as well as modifying and flexibly realigning goals if required.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public school 340 (PS 340)	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+X
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