



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Vida Bogart School for All Children

Public School 352 Bronx

**730 Bryant Avenue
Bronx
NY 10474**

Principal: Lourdes Mendez

Dates of review: February 7 – 9, 2007

Reviewer: Alvin Jeffs

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 352X is a new school situated in the western section of the Bronx, serving the needs of students with autism, emotional disturbances and severe learning difficulties. The school comprises one central and two off-sites for students with similar learning difficulties. The student population is 51% Hispanic and 46% Black, with 2% White and 2% Asian.

The school works in partnership it with Astor Day Treatment Programmed to meet the needs of its students.

Their mission is to provide the diverse student population, numbering 255, with a meaningful educational experience in a safe and challenging environment. It is also their goal “to move the students along a path that will help them realize their educational and social potential, while providing opportunities that are structured to promote successful experiences”.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Despite early resource problems, the school now provides a good education for students with a range of complex difficulties.
- The new principal is respected by students, parents and staff, as a good manager and a skilled practitioner.
- She has an appropriate vision of the teaching she wishes to develop, based upon detailed assessment and goal-setting with clear deadlines.
- Data collection and analysis in the area of attendance has already begun to produce results.
- Staff have a deep respect for students which is shown in relationships and teaching styles throughout the school.
- This respect is reciprocated by students, who see staff as understanding and keen to help them achieve.
- Good collaborative work is developing in a number of settings, including between the teaching staff and the Astor Day Treatment Program.
- Although not consistent throughout the school, there is some exceptionally good teaching in individual classrooms.
- Some collaborative work around planning and differentiation is taking place between teachers, although this tends to be informal at present.
- The large number of staff new to teaching show considerable commitment to the school and frequently seek opportunities to develop their skills in this specialized area of work.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a common system for the collection and analysis of data on academics and behavior.
- Use the data to set measurable goals, with timescales and interim milestones against which progress can be measured, for individual students, groups and whole-school improvement.
- Use data to devise consistent curricular and instructional approaches to meet the individual needs of students.
- Develop collaborative ways of working to ensure that there is consistency and expertise in the assessment of students and the development of goals.
- Continue attendance procedures so that all students meet their necessary targets in this area.
- Develop appropriate training for paraprofessionals.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

The school is an undeveloped school.

In August 2006, the principal was faced with the challenge of setting up a school in premises recently vacated by other schools. She had to manage newly delivered furniture and distribute available educational resources. In addition, she successfully filled 28 teaching and 20 paraprofessional vacancies before the school opened in September.

The school opened its doors on time as a functioning entity. Twenty-one of the teacher vacancies were filled by New York City Teaching Fellows and by other staff who do not have extensive experience in educating autistic students.

It is a tribute not only to the principal, but to everyone involved, that the school provides an interesting and highly valued education for students with some very complex and challenging learning difficulties. It is also of note that parents are highly supportive of the care and education their children are receiving. However, as might be expected, many systems are in the very early stages of development.

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 undeveloped.

The recent opening of the school and the sometimes incomplete nature of new student records make it difficult for the school to make any use of data at the moment. However, the school is steadily putting together detailed records of all students and supplementing these with the day-to-day observations and assessments of teachers and Astor Day Program staff. The academic data currently collected by staff is limited, but focuses on key areas for student development. Thus, all classes are now using a reading, writing and mathematics continuum that give a detailed idea of where a student has reached and the potential to discuss where the teacher should go next.

The development of detailed data-gathering and the discussion of such data with a view to action within each class, each grade and throughout the school is currently being planned for. Within the area of attendance, the principal has put into place very strong procedures which bring together all of the relevant information, alerts teachers and other staff to possible problems and keeps a detailed running record on each student. She sees this process as setting a standard for all data collection and interrogation within the school.

As there is little formal collection of student-related data apart from attendance, the school is not able to analyze and interpret patterns and trends within groups, grades or classes. However, a start has been made with different approaches to between the classes for autism and those for emotional difficulties. At present, data-gathering and analysis are not in a developed enough form to allow decisions to be made about class composition as well

as the development and modification of programs. This is similarly the case with regard to comparisons between schools of a similar nature.

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 undeveloped.

At the moment, time for staff collaboration is limited due to the school’s efforts at establishing day-to-day procedures for students and parents. However, discussions with teachers, paraprofessionals and students indicate that a relevant school culture is developing, including the collection and analysis of data about academic and behavioral progress. Where this has been done on a consistent basis, staff have been updated and students’ assessments modified. This, in turn, has led teachers to plan for individuals more accurately and also begin to identify which factors might be contributing to lack of progress or misbehavior.

For example, one young student with autism has progressed by leaps and bounds over the past few months because his teacher has made acute observations, which ensure that she knows what he can and cannot do. This information has then been used to inform her planning with the paraprofessional team, so that all tasks and responses are consistent. The data has also provided a basis for constructive discussions at case meetings with other staff and in updates with the child’s mother. At present this is not done consistently with all students throughout the school. There are still many teachers who do not use data regularly in order to plan lessons and set group targets. Goals in individual education plans are not sufficiently modified in order to create shorter-term goals to mark the next steps in learning.

Staff show great sensitivity in seeing patterns of behavior and responding when a student is in crisis. This is particularly apparent with regard to behavior management. The work carried out in conjunction with the Astor Day Program is particularly effective in this area. The Astor staff are highly regarded, work well with classroom staff and show a high level of skill in identifying causes of misbehavior and talking them through with students, teachers and parents.

Although high expectations are held for all students, these are not always discussed and conveyed to students. There is some good practice in terms of student-teacher conferencing, but no consistency between classes. Where this is happening, significant progress is being made. The administration is aware of the need to help teachers identify relevant targets and communicate them to students. Because goal-setting is still at a very early stage, parents are not involved in the setting of shorter-term goals for their children, although they are included in reviews of individual education plans. Links with some parents are regular and good, but not all parents are fully involved in their child’s education. Those parents who are involved receive good advice from the school, including how to support their children at home.

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 undeveloped.

In some ways, the school has benefited from an influx of staff new to teaching. They have brought to the school freshness and enthusiasm that keep the student at the center of their thinking. They have sought to combine the best of the mandated curriculum with the best of alternate curricula. Consequently, classes are vibrant places where students are accepted for whom they are and where there is a range of stimulating experiences. They have yet to prove how successful these approaches have been, but there is evidence that that good teaching, with pace, effective use of resources and good discipline, is assisting the development of good interactive and language skills in all students.

The administration has ensured that scheduling has matched teachers effectively with particular groups of students so that relationships are good. Resources are developing well, with the major exception of technology, where there is a deficiency. There is limited adequate space and access for activity-based work and play. Access to a gymnasium is dependent on other schools and there is little opportunity for young children to have outside play. Although teachers have adapted well and students are always engaged effectively in class, the small physical space of the classrooms creates some challenges when teaching. Much has been overcome by the mutual respect existing between staff and students, but there are significant space constraints that limit effective interaction between staff and students, and a broad curriculum.

Attendance is a very high priority and the school’s response constitutes is well developed. All staff respond promptly to absence and are supportive when genuine distress is encountered. The rise overall in attendance rates is a tribute to very good processes and strong relationships. The principal is determined that this strong upward trend will continue.

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 undeveloped.

Senior staff are clear about the qualities they seek and new staff hires will be based on the drive for achievement and the monitoring of progress. Effective partnerships, such as those with the Hubert G Birch School, the Leadership Academy and District 75 coaches have been very effective in complementing staff enthusiasm with the skills necessary to work effectively with their students. Lessons are regularly observed by the principal who provides valuable insights during discussions, but, as yet, there is little time for peer observations or opportunities to discuss approaches within grades or departments. Team planning and discussion so far has been informal and more often on the basis of friendship than institutional links. Staff would value more time to sit down and talk about individual students and ways of matching planning and tasks more effectively.

There is a mixture of experience among the paraprofessionals. Many are new to this kind of work and all staff agree that further training for this group will assist in developing new ways of working and consistent approaches to behavior and learning.

The principal is well respected. She is very approachable, has an open-door policy and students say “she has got a lot of time for us students”. Students and staff indicate that it is her leadership that has made the school, in one student’s word, “like a family”. She is now working hard to bring speech and language therapy support services into the school to further support the additional needs of students.

On a day-to-day basis the school runs very smoothly across all sites and there is good contact between them. Staff and students are clear about procedures and problems are promptly and effectively handled.

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 undeveloped.

Much of the early months of this school’s life has been focused on securing staff, furniture, rooms and resources. As a result, written plans and procedures are not yet in place. The principal is beginning the writing of a full Comprehensive Education Plan to begin to bring a more strategic approach to addressing issues. The principal’s open door policy ensures that all staff are being consulted with regard to the Comprehensive Education Plan.

Where formal planning has taken place this has been carried out realistically, with good deadlines, and has been followed through with rigor. Attendance is the best example of where clear guidelines, consistency among staff, good communication within the school and to students’ homes has contributed to rapid improvement.

Senior staff have achieved their early goals of ensuring that the school is up and running, parents and students are happy and clear ways of working are developing. They understand that more accurate assessment and target-setting will begin to assist in the further progress of students. One parent observed that, after being hesitant at the start of the year, she was convinced that “If the school continues at its present rate of improvement, people will be knocking down the door to get their children here.”

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Vida Bogart School for All Children (PS 352X)	∅	✓	+
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		