



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Public School 77**

**Elementary - High School 077**

**62 Park Place  
Brooklyn  
NY 11217**

**Principal: Merryl Redner-Cohen**

**Dates of review: March 3 - 4, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 77 is a District 75 school with 294 students from kindergarten through grade 12+. The school population comprises 55.5% Black, 20% Hispanic, 18.8% White, 1% American Indian and 4.5% Asian students. The student body includes 9.4% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 81% of the students enrolled and girls account for 19%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 91%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Public School 77K is located on seven sites and serves students who are on the autistic spectrum. The school has 46 classes, of which eight are inclusion classes with general education students. The school makes creative use of the very limited space available at some sites. All students take either the New York State alternate assessment tests (approximately 96%) or standardized tests (approximately 4%).

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal offers a strong lead in her vision to give each student a voice through building on staff and student strengths.
- The leadership team works cohesively with determination to continually improve student outcomes.
- Structures and systems are in place that ensure all sites operate with common goals.
- The collection of comprehensive data about individual students is a well-established practice and there is commitment to deepen analysis further.
- New staff are valued for their energy and enthusiasm, which enhances the dedication of all staff, and are mentored well.
- Students are comfortable in school, enjoy the opportunities they have and are well supported.
- The wide curriculum is interesting and well adapted so that it is accessible for all students within a safe, welcoming environment.
- A caring, nurturing culture pervades the calm, safe environment where student success is celebrated throughout and space is used creatively.
- Transition planning and preparation for change is given high priority for all students throughout the school.
- Parents appreciate the efforts made by all staff and the open communication channels with the school.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to refine data collection to ensure progress is accurately measured and recorded with consistency.
- Establish further opportunities to discuss with all staff how data impacts on instruction towards meeting students' individual education plan goals.
- Define clear, measurable goals for all teachers to build on their strengths in order to further address student needs and accelerate progress.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

The school works strenuously to develop the students' academic, social and emotional skills with integrated life skills preparation. Strong leadership and a collegial staff mean that the students' best interests are always at the forefront of all planning. The students' individual education plan is central to all planning so detailed data collection is ongoing and comprehensive. The school places great emphasis on enabling students to communicate their wants and needs in order that they become as independent as possible. It successfully helps students to find their voice verbally, with the aid of symbols or with communication devices. Thorough preparation for each change in a student's situation is a characteristic of this caring school. Transition planning is continual to ensure maximum acclimatization and comfort for this student population. The school has a positive outlook and aspires to reach the high, yet realistic standards it sets for each student. It endeavors to fully involve parents in the education of their child and to act on parent's goals for each. Relationships between staff and students are warm, with meaningful student engagement an ongoing focus.

Following the recommendations of the previous Quality Review, the school is engaged in a program of systematic data integration and analysis across the school. Universal data collection systems feed into a summary database. From this synthesis, information is aggregated and disaggregated on the progress of sites, classes and other parameters. Entry of data is in its early stages. Teachers have a much-improved understanding of what constitutes data and how it can be utilized to inform next instructional steps. Planning overall has clearer timeframes with more measurable goals. Personal goals for teachers linked to school plans have not yet been formalized. The parent coordinator and all staff continually work to encourage parents to meet together and to involve them more fully in their child's learning. Although there are many committed and active parents, some choose to be less involved in school.

The school has established an inquiry team drawn from the different sites which ensures good cross-fertilization of ideas. The school-based coach provides continuity. The team meets frequently and has a three-phase intervention program in place with the aim to improve the specific communication skill of students' ability to request. This is being trialed with the selected target group of fifteen students. Ongoing findings are shared with all staff, including cluster teachers.

## **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 the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Throughout the school the well-established practice of gathering multiple forms of hard and soft data builds a comprehensive picture of individual student progress. The individual education plan underpins all work. The Brigance Inventory of Early Development is used twice a year to carefully assess progress in life skills. For this student population the assessment of small, incremental developmental steps toward mastery of specific skills is a vital component. Ongoing assessments and varied forms of supporting evidence are collected in comprehensive student portfolios within the classroom. Digital imaging, including DVD and photography, successfully captures evidence of progress toward mastery of skills. The new universal data collection system summary spreadsheet is updated four times a year. This enables the administration to continue to have a thorough, but more consistent, overview of progress by individuals, classes, groups and sites. Data is gathered under "headers" of academic, social interaction, job skills, communication, and behavior progress toward goals. The administration, in particular the data specialist, is making a significant impact on streamlining the wealth of data about students that is collected across the school. Accurate recording, including specific measurement of progress, is not yet consistent in all areas across the school.

The school has good programming to meet the needs of English language learners through the English as a second language methodology. It carefully compares progress for the individual student and assistant principals maintain thorough oversight of the different sites. Through analysis of trends over time, it has noted that young entrants increasingly have the precursor skills to learn due to preschool, interventions or Headstart programs. The school looks to share best practices in the education of students on the autistic spectrum with other schools. It continually refers to standards-based education in order to raise its own bar for students. Training is ongoing at the level that teachers require, though many also collaborate to improve skills based on the needs of their students. Not all teachers are yet highly skilled at using data to inform instruction towards meeting individual education plan goals.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school works cohesively with determination to continually improve student outcomes. Goals are set for each student aligned with the individual education plan. Teachers create action plans to achieve the goals. Regular planning aligns with whole school goals. Meetings of different groups within each site feed back to the main site. The school is rigorous in its expectations of its own performance and continually reviews and revises plans for individuals, classes and groups. Long-and short-term objectives are regularly set and revised to measure progress. Not all objectives are clearly measurable nor time referenced. Transition planning and student preparation is given high priority for all

students throughout the school. Planning for next year's classes is begun early in the year and evolves, based on excellent knowledge of students' strengths and needs. Detailed skills analysis and breakdown is effective in leading students toward mastery. Worksite master plans, for example, track student target steps in workplace skill development. The school works hard to deliver the services that each student requires in a timely manner. All constituents work together when possible to fulfill the student's individual education plan goals. Some students assess their own progress in specific areas, which gives them ownership and increases their self-esteem.

The school is a caring, calm community with high expectations that are explicit throughout. Space is used very effectively as staff are highly flexible and put students first. The nurturing atmosphere encourages open communication and liaison, which parents appreciate. The school tries to address the goals that parents set for their child. Parents believe the school is, "Full of hope. It pushes them." They acknowledge the efforts of all staff, saying, "It takes a very special person to work with these kids." Parents are deeply concerned, however, that related services are not always immediately available for their child, but recognize this is outside the school's control.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school has devised a standards-based curriculum for all students that taps into student interests and motivates them. The varied curriculum encompasses the development of social and work-based skills, with components such as music, art and computer technology allowing alternative ways of expression and pleasure. Students enjoy the opportunities they have, especially work placements for older students. Shows they perform and trips they undertake support learning. Comprehensive attention to individual support needs, push-in services and programs such as Star Reporter and Meville to Weville enhance the kinesthetic approach to monthly thematic studies. This results in students making good progress. The school moves students to less restrictive environments as a result of data analysis. The curriculum is adapted for the individual and learning is scaffolded with built-in, continual assessment.

Teachers are very dedicated and self-motivated. They feel accountable for student progress and informally team-teach at times to enrich learning. Thematic studies integrate cluster content so that students are engaged and different learning styles are more readily addressed. All staff are highly skilled at adapting work for individual students with the use of alternate communication devices and symbols as required. Students work through clear individual schedules with visual cues and take responsibility for their learning through supportive structures and ongoing reinforcement. The school balances its resources creatively to provide for student needs. The Brain Gym program helps students to focus. New bells were purchased for the bell choir, which performs in the community.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school prioritizes professional development for all staff. Bus drivers receive training in the Mayer-Johnson communication symbols that are used to support students. The strong administration is careful in its selection of staff and builds on staff strengths. An inclusion teacher is leading professional development on differentiation within a general education site. The administration approach is constructive and non-threatening with frequent formal and informal observations backed up by written and verbal feedback. The school-based coach ensures cohesion across all sites. The school does not formalize clear development goals for all staff that address student needs. Opportunities to visit other classrooms occur formally and informally. The staff is highly collaborative and proactive. Paraprofessionals have taken the initiative to use the Boardmaker program for creating books using words and communication symbols.

Comprehensive support systems are in place to mentor teachers. Staff are collegial and freely share good practice. The dedication of all staff is enhanced by the energy and enthusiasm of new teachers. Students receive good guidance services. Effective career development programs are in place for older students, notably in culinary and maintenance skills. All sites run smoothly with common practices and procedures that ensure safety and a good learning environment. Strong routines and clear discipline procedures are reinforced so that students understand and are comfortable. Some of the many productive partnerships that contribute greatly to student learning and skill development include local businesses and restaurants, high schools, a private school, and the public libraries.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school has an effective administration that ensures all sites operate with consistent focus through frequent visits and constant communication. The principal sets the calm, reflective tone for the school and her strong leadership means the school community shares her vision to give each student a voice. Good progress has been made to refine data collection and systematically analyze it. Regular and purposeful cabinet meetings are focused on planning, review and revision. Whole school goals and student goals are clearly defined. Not all goals and targets across the school are sufficiently specific, measurable and time referenced. The school recognizes this and refinement continues to sharpen processes and consolidate improvements. A culture of reflection and revision drives the school forward with student outcomes firmly in mind. Staff are adept at ongoing modification and adaptation. Teachers clearly record progress towards mastery of skills and concepts. These are carefully and regularly reviewed at class, site and school level. Strategic planning based on data means that practices are modified or revised. These inform forward planning. The impact of initiatives on student outcomes defines the next cycle of planning. Increased use of manipulatives is already showing positive impact on student learning. This data is used in reviewing the success of initiatives. Excellent communication and interaction with families ensures that planning for transition towards maximum student dependence encompasses the home and school. The school makes a significant positive impact on student and family lives. It evaluates itself well and is in a good state to build on its current success.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Public School 77K (K077)</b>	△	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X		

### Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?			X		
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X		

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X		

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>