



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Fort Hamilton School

Elementary- Middle School 104

**9115 5th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11209**

Principal: Miss Marie DiBella

Dates of review: December 6 - 10, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Terry Brown

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

Progress made since the last review

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

Fort Hamilton School is an elementary-middle school with 1263 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 7% Black, 22% Hispanic, 55% White, and 16% Asian students. The student body includes 12.6% English language learners and 1.8% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 94.1%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school is overcrowded, and is currently at 125% capacity. It is housed on two sites, and has no science lab or dedicated art room. Some 5th grade students leave to go to junior high schools with a speciality in, for example, science or drama. Army base children arrive at short notice, often with no data, are assessed quickly to provide interventions and/or enrichment, and incorporated into the school family with sensitivity and relevant support from other members. A group of special education students from a district 75 school occupy some of the building and are often unobtrusively integrated into classrooms.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- All members of the school community appreciate, and contribute to, the safe, secure family atmosphere, which provides any support required.
- The principal models strong, caring, sophisticated, diligent, reflective and distributed leadership, an example followed by her assistants and staff.
- Staff are eager to learn, collaboratively apply themselves whole-heartedly to developments and give of their personal time for the students' benefit.
- The administration and teachers use all external and school generated data to be aware of, and to track, the performance and progress of all students.
- Staff and students are fully involved in setting goals for improving student performance and implementing the agreed plans to achieve them.
- Substantial, multi-layered and targeted professional development ensures teachers know how to use data to differentiate instruction.
- The principal makes the best use of available funding, personnel, space and resources for the teachers to teach and the students to learn.
- Students are becoming familiar with their child friendly goals and the methods for recording their classroom activities.
- The broad and balanced curriculum engages students in a range of arts, technology, sport and altruistic activities in and outside of the school day.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the use of collaborative group work to maximize active student participation and develop higher order thinking skills.
- Encourage parents to become more proactive and support them to understand differentiated goal setting and manage meaningful homework.
- Support upper grade students in developing more responsibility for their own learning and progress, in preparation for the high school experience.
- Continue to reflectively refine and develop current systems, integrate them in school practice and ensure they are maintained regardless of staffing changes.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

“We are family” is the slogan of this school and it is a true description of how it operates. All students and staff are respected for who they are and what they bring to the school. They are supported in their personal and academic growth from the accurate picture gleaned from a variety of sources. They are provided with whatever is relevant to their needs at any point in their development. The administration applies itself seriously to improving the school. The teachers are eager to enhance their teaching and the learning experiences of the students. The staff is reflective and realistic in their approach, but would appreciate more proactive support from more of the parents.

All areas for development from the previous Quality Review have been progressed. Teachers now make frequent inter visitations to share instructional activities. Data on the quality of teaching practices is now more fully analyzed. Student interim goals are more explicit and written in student friendly language. Developments have occurred in support of mathematics and science, and the system for reviewing writing samples in them. Additional elements for development mentioned in the text of the review have also been progressed. This school takes the Quality Review process very seriously.

The inquiry team has identified its target group, implemented instructional practices, shared results and started its monitoring role.

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 well developed.

The principal involved the Senior Achievement Facilitator (SAF) to inform strategic developments. She provided professional development for all staff who as a result are now aware of the importance of gathering and using data. The inquiry team and the assistant principal data specialist have received substantial training on the interpretation and extended uses of various information sources and analytical tools. They in turn provide the rest of the staff with information and support in using them.

Teachers gather data from a range of formal and informal outcome sources to heighten their understanding of each student. All externally and internally gathered data for all

individuals and groups of students is used to organize classes from one year to the next. Data is passed on to the new teachers as well as Children's First Intensive tracking sheets.

In addition, special education students and English language learners are effectively monitored and tracked by the pupil personnel team and the resource room and reading recovery teachers. The in-depth analysis and disaggregation of data has alerted the school to trends in student achievement. There has been a drop in performance in level three and four students in grades four and five in English language arts proficiency. Junior high boys score lower generally, and African Americans in English language arts. Data relating to individual classes, year to year grades and subject areas are also analyzed to see if any pattern emerges.

The administration provides teachers with constantly updated information about their students to add to that generated in the classroom. Teachers therefore have a full understanding of their students' performance and are able easily to monitor their progress and plan further learning experiences.

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 well developed.

The administration, with the support of the SAF and other groups, has set realistic, objectively measurable goals for the school. Teachers then use the goal setting data and in turn set targets for their class, for mini-lessons for groups that need specific development, and for individuals. Predictive tests are used in advance of conferring with students so goals are written in a language they understand. Particular focus is given to students underperforming and those losing proficiency or not making adequate yearly progress.

Parents were invited to a meeting led by the SAF to explain the difference between performance and progress. All data and goals are shared at parent teacher conferences. Parents are kept informed of any changes in data and subsequent programs. The school makes great efforts to involve the parents. Those who attend appreciate that the teachers know their students very well. However, the school is disappointed at the high number who are not proactively involved in their children's education.

The principal has monthly "chats" with all teachers. These are used to support the analysis of data, and to monitor classroom goal setting in relation to whole school data and goals. They take into account observations, assessment binders and benchmarked student work. Particular attention is given to those students identified as in greatest need of improvement.

This substantial and thorough approach ensures that students and their teachers are made fully aware of what they need to learn next to achieve the high goals they have agreed to aim for.

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.

Teachers in each grade level meet to develop and improve curriculum maps for the core curriculum as well as for museum studies, technology, meteorology, vocal music and fine arts. These are shared by the grade leaders across the grades to ensure continuity and progression in the curriculum experiences available to students. Unit exams in grades two through eight have been developed, and are aligned with the format of state exams. They are implemented in English language arts, science and social studies, to provide interim data and test familiarization skills. As a response to data, there is now a uniform approach to the extended day instructional program and a focus on decoding and comprehension in the lower grades.

Writing samples and assessment binders are moderated and benchmarked by the principal and assistant principals. This moderation process has now been extended to the grade level meetings to enable staff to have a common understanding of benchmark levels to assist them when planning and grading work. As a result the teachers are becoming more reflective about their teaching. They use data as a basis for differentiating instruction and are comfortable in doing so. They know from the predictive tests what students know and can do and can pinpoint which teaching strategies have been most successful in engaging students in their learning. The instructional team includes representatives from all grades so information from across the school informs developments and is shared with all staff.

The budget is used well to provide teachers with all the resources they need to meet the needs of the students. Similarly staffing to reflect the needs elicited from whole school data and to enrich the curriculum are hired. These include a full-time counselor and a part-time (F-Status) retired teacher to support high school applications.

Students feel they can approach any adult, especially the principal and her assistants if they have a problem. They know that they will be dealt with openly, immediately, and supportively, and that the situation will not escalate as a result. Teachers, parents and particularly students, emphasize the trusting, respectful and supportive nature of the school, which permeates down from the actions and behavior of the principal and her assistants. This encourages the school community to have a pride in their school and students to eagerly continue their academic and personal development.

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 well developed.

Following clear communication of the whole school goals, the administration surveyed staff to ascertain their professional development needs. A comprehensive and substantial teacher needs led approach is now in place. All staff have received training on the use of data to improve teaching and learning. A large number have benefited from extensive input from a literacy consultant. Individuals and small groups have

attended external training in a range of areas to develop specific skills. Teachers welcome the informal classroom observations that take place on a regular basis as it is now followed by immediate and constructive feedback which helps to further improve their instruction. Inter visitations to observe good practice is encouraged and staff find this opportunity extremely beneficial. New teachers are mentored and nurtured by non-classroom and classroom teachers. They have the opportunity to visit other classrooms with an assistant principal, whenever they think it worthwhile. All staff are therefore constantly improving their understanding and practice of differentiated instruction by utilizing whatever internal and external support is available.

The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis. Clear procedures form the basis for quick and sensitive responses to any issues that need a negotiated, caring resolution. The many partnerships with outside entities provide extra-curricular activities which offer not just enriching experiences, but an opportunity to give back to the community in a way that encourages it to become a natural thing to do.

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 well developed.

All data from external sources such as test results, progress report, learning environment survey and Quality Review are collated to provide a comprehensive picture of the school. They inform the development of goals in the collaboratively written Comprehensive Education Plan. This is a working document, which is frequently referred to. The detail and time frames for the long-term and interim goals are adapted according to circumstances, such as the results of internally developed unit tests based on the format of state exams. Outcomes of formal and informal assessments, observations and monitoring activities are used to consider the effectiveness of all plans and interventions. Revision occurs as and when necessary, at whole school level, or with individuals or targeted groups.

All activities contribute to the clear vision of maintaining the family atmosphere of the school, while responding thoughtfully to external developments. This is a reflective school, which wants to continue improving. The staff wants to learn to use data more effectively, enhance instruction and ultimately improve all student outcomes.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Fort Hamilton School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				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 . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				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 . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				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 . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				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 make 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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X	