



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Silas B Dutcher School

Elementary School 124

**515 4th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11215**

Principal: Annabelle Martinez

Dates of review: March 27 - 28, 2008

Lead Reviewer: George Wallace

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Silas B Dutcher is an elementary school with 315 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 12.4% Black, 68.1% Hispanic, 14.3% White, and 4.4% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 12.7% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 86% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school runs extremely smoothly and provides a safe, caring, nurturing and pleasant environment in which students work and flourish..
- Parents provide strong support for the school and value the frequency and quality of information they receive.
- The school collects and analyzes a wide range of invaluable data and has been particularly effective in comparing data with similar schools.
- Teachers know and are highly positive about their accountability for students' academic and social development.
- The curriculum has been enriched and expanded with staff always working to broaden the ways in which the subjects are taught.
- Effective systems and procedures ensure that attendance is high and lateness kept to a minimum.
- Productive partnerships between the school and outside bodies are linked well to students' academic, personal and social needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Formalize school improvement planning and ensure that data analysis is used to monitor and evaluate interim the school's progress towards goals..
- Sharpen the procedures by which senior leaders track and analyze trends in performance and progress data over time for classes and grades.
- Ensure that students understand the learning objective for each lesson.
- Further develop collaborative working and ensure all staff understand the school's goals.
- Build on existing good practice among some teachers to consolidate and make more consistent the core practices of student goal setting and differentiation in lessons.

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 provides students with a safe, caring and pleasant environment in which to work. Some classrooms are highly stimulating. The school is both committed to and successful in working towards improving students' standards of achievement. Teachers know and accept their accountability towards students' academic, personal and social development. They have high expectations of students' learning and consequently there have been significant improvements in the State test results in math and English language arts over the recent past. Although many students are unclear about their next learning steps, there are a few excellent examples of teachers ensuring that students know their learning goals. In those classes, students are very clear about what it is they have to do to improve and conferencing about the future starts with a focus on the former goals. However, there is inconsistent use of the aims at the start or end of lessons to ensure students know the purpose of each session.

Parents support their school strongly and value its family atmosphere. The curriculum satisfies students' needs and includes a good arts and science program. Science is particularly strong and students thoroughly enjoy their science investigations. Teachers use student performance data suitably well and specifically to help plan their lessons. They mainly use the data to determine which elements of a topic require re-teaching or whether only a few students need special attention. However, they do not generally use data well to plan activities and work that challenges students working at different levels.

Since the last Quality Review, the school has successfully increased the amount of information and the range of activities it provides for parents. Parents are delighted with the frequency and quality of information they receive from the school. School leaders have made data analysis a priority, but data analysis is not fully understood by all staff. There is no evaluative record of interim or final outcomes in relation to the school's goals and staff are largely unaware of whole schools goals for each school year. While class and grade performance data is recorded, senior leaders do not track interpret and use it efficiently, especially to look at trends from year on year over time. The inquiry team has worked diligently to improve students' breadth and depth of vocabulary. The outcomes are beginning to have a positive impact on teaching and learning.

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.

The school collects a wide range of invaluable, relevant data. The principal receives information from teachers frequently and has a good understanding of the progress and performance of students, especially in English language arts and math. Teachers also collect a wide range of data especially in reading because of conferencing with students and use this information to set next steps in learning. There has been some analysis of data based on specific student groups such as boys and girls. This has led to an increase in the availability of non-fiction books for boys in classes and the library.

The identification of patterns and trends in data is in its infancy. Although the school passes on standardized test data and other information arising from teachers' assessments from teacher to teacher each year, there is no overall tracking of the performance and progress of classes and grades. In addition, It does not use previous performance data to monitor and project test level scores to ascertain whether classes and grades are on track and showing improvements. The school is very effective in comparing data against other schools and this has lead to intervisitation with other establishments. Although good data analysis training occurs, the school continues to develop and broaden its understanding of data interpretation, especially at grades 3, 4 and 5. It currently focuses most training on Acuity and item analysis.

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 is growing in confidence and beginning to develop collaborative approaches to working, but this is not yet widespread or well established. Student and staff surveys provide invaluable information about needs and enable senior leaders to provide a focus on specific development issues and goal setting. However, the data is not systematically analyzed and summary findings presented to staff or students.

Students feel well supported and some know and understand that they have learning goals that specifically aid their next steps for learning. However, this procedure is inconsistent throughout the school. The school has worked effectively on raising the achievement of the lowest performing students. Teachers focus well on each student, and those in greatest need receive special support. The work of the inquiry team has also provided strong and lasting support for a group of students with specific weaknesses in literacy. The impact of the work of the team has also had positive effects on approaches to teaching.

In some lessons, science in particular, expectations of all students' learning are strong and students find the work interesting and challenging. However, teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough across the school. Parents' like their school and know it to be a warm and supportive place with a family atmosphere. They value the open door policy and the ease with which they can contact teachers. Parents also appreciate the amount of information provided about events in the school, help they can get together with the information they receive on their child's progress and performance. The school has increased the range of activities available to parents. These now include cooking, safety, health issues as well as specific activities related to their children's learning such as literacy and math.

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 proficient.

The curriculum is satisfactory and includes a motivating arts program. Teachers collect meaningful data through the school year to realign curricular objectives and determine interventions and support for students requiring additional help. A specialist science teacher ensures that students approach their science in an investigative and inquiry-based way ensuring a specific approach to students’ thinking. They also enjoy plenty of practical activities. There is no gymnasium at the school but grade 2 students follow a swimming program in a nearby pool. An extensive after school enrichment program that includes chess and photography effectively broadens students’ horizons.

Teachers recognize that they are accountable for their students’ learning. Students feel safe and teachers ensure they learn in a comfortable environment with some classrooms of a highly stimulating character. Teachers use periodic data to identify which topics require re-teaching. If only a few students fail to grasp a concept, then a small group is formed to revise the topic. Other than this procedure, there is little differentiation in lessons to provide activities with just the right amount of challenge for students working at different levels.

The principal is effective in her control of the budgeting and scheduling. Students respect their peers and teachers. The school has implemented a procedures that have led to an increase in attendance rates over recent years.

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 principal makes useful formal observations of lessons and provides staff with good written feedback. In addition, she walks through classes daily and provides comments. Such observations have revealed that some teaching and learning requires improvement and professional development has been identified to resolve these weaknesses. Where there is a strong program of monitoring coupled with good professional development activities, improvements in planning and teaching has occurred. However, the principal does not use a clear set of criteria to judge the effectiveness of teaching on learning.

The core goals of the Comprehensive Education Plan are the main drivers for professional development. The administration carries out a needs analysis, but no management summary made to identify the breadth of professional development required beyond those meeting whole school needs. Teachers value professional development and there are some positive ways in which senior leaders are responding to these needs. However, it is not systematic or consistent across all staff. Teachers have some opportunities to visit other classes, especially the teaching of science. Although few teachers have joined the school in recent years staff indicate that there is strong informal network of help.

Students feel well supported academically and personally, and comment favorably on the wide range of activities provided. The school runs smoothly with students who behave well, have good attitudes to learning and show positive relationships with their peers. Productive partnerships between the school and outside bodies are linked well to students' academic, personal and social needs.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school's approach to improvement planning, monitoring and evaluation is largely informal. The principal's leading document outlining school improvement goals is the Comprehensive Education Plan. Planning for improvement also relies heavily on the principal's personal goals and the way in which she gathers information to identify needs and bring about change. The school does not use data well enough to measure success against planned goals. There is no attention to any formal interim evaluations, whether in relation to interim goals, or simply findings arising from an assessment of where the school is in relation to its annual goals. While there is some good professional development for teachers, there is no systematic plan linked to whole school goals for improvement or individual goals for teacher improvement. However, there has been a focus on Acuity training and on improving students' literacy skills in other subjects. The principal discusses improvement programs with teachers and keeps abreast of the impact of any training undertaken by teachers.

Teachers collect periodic assessment data and use it successfully to identify needs for students in different grades. While the approach provides some feedback on the effectiveness of the implementation of strategies, there are no formal systems of evaluation. Aspirations, such as "Improve students' handwriting" are worthy, but are not expressed as formal written plans with measurable goals. Teachers evaluate the overall performance of their students at the end of the year and while discussing students with the teacher who will next take the class they pass on detailed records. The principal reads this information and provides written feedback to teachers, but does not keep a record. There is no evidence that students' performance and progress data is used to make strategic changes to practices to bring about student improvement. It is all done on an ad hoc basis. Formal evaluation of interim outcomes are weak, although final outcomes are evaluated in an informal way and do influence change. There is a clear vision for school improvement, and while current systems are bringing growth there is no way of measuring the overall impact of strategies or whether more robust procedures would bring about change in a more timely way and with greater impact.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Silas B Dutcher 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 rigorous, 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 and tardiness?				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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				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 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		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					
		X			

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped