



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Rachel Jean Mitchell School

Elementary – Middle School 137

**121 Saratoga Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11233**

Principal: Loria Tucker

Dates of review: May 20 – 21, 2008

Lead Reviewer: John Hudson

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Rachel Jean Mitchell School is an elementary school – middle school with 459 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 85% Black, 15% Hispanic and less than 1% other students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 88.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 99.4% eligibility.

Students progressed through to grade 8 for the first time this year. The school has now completed its transition from a pre-kindergarten through grade 5 elementary school. The school is located in two buildings that are situated four blocks apart. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten are in the basement of one building which is occupied by three other schools. Other grades are based in the main building.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, supported by the school community, is taking effective action to drive the school towards higher achievement.
- Leaders and teachers use data well to evaluate performance periodically among students, classrooms, grades, sub groups and subjects.
- The principal and her staff compare the school's performance with higher achieving schools to identify best practice and emulate it.
- Administration and faculty provide good support for students in need of improvement.
- The school involves students and parents in the process of establishing what each student needs to do to meet their next learning goal
- A broad and interesting curriculum, within and outside the school day, includes art, dance, drama and music.
- Administrators hold teachers to account for the quality of their instruction and the progress of students in their charge.
- The principal makes good use of resources to meet school goals and raise student achievement.
- An atmosphere of mutual trust and respect pervades this calm, nurturing and well-ordered learning environment.
- Teachers observe each other's instruction and reflect on effective practices.

What the school needs to improve

- Continuously monitor what each student knows and can do to maintain a constantly updated understanding of student progress over time.
- Set objectively measurable benchmarks so progress can be evaluated rigorously at frequent intervals towards demanding but achievable goals.
- Improve the consistency of instruction to ensure every learner achieves challenging longer term goals.
- Use progress data routinely to evaluate the effectiveness of all plans, processes and systems and revise them immediately if required.
- Continue to improve student attendance and punctuality so all students benefit from opportunities to promote their learning and achievement.

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 proficient.

With the full support of her community, the principal is taking decisive and effective action to drive the school towards higher achievement. Leaders and teachers make good use of data to monitor student performance. The school uses the Acuity data management system and standardized State test outcomes to track achievement at intervals through the school year. Student achievement is not measured sufficiently frequently to maintain a constantly updated understanding of student progress over time. The principal and her staff evaluate the school's performance in comparison with higher achieving schools and visit these schools to identify and share best practice. The principal and her staff have not set objectively measurable benchmarks so progress cannot be evaluated rigorously at frequent intervals through the year. Administrators and faculty provide good support for students in need of improvement and are successful in moving students up from level 1 in math and English language arts.

The curriculum is broad and interesting, within and outside the school day, and includes art, dance, drama and music. Administrators hold teachers accountable for the quality of their instruction and the progress of students in their charge. There is some very good instruction which is differentiated to meet the needs of learners and challenges them to improve their progress. This is not consistent across all classrooms, however. The principal makes good decisions on how resources are allocated to support student achievement and meet school goals. The principal and her staff have created a calm, nurturing and well-ordered learning environment. An atmosphere of mutual trust and respect pervades the school.

The principal and assistant principals monitor the performance of teachers. They refine professional development activities and coaching to promote consistently high-quality instruction. Teachers observe each other's instruction and reflect on effective practices. The school is establishing procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of all plans, processes and systems so they may be revised immediately if required. The school has made progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report. Teachers and parents are involved more directly in setting school goals. Teacher attendance has improved and students attend more regularly and punctually. The inquiry team is working with a group of grade 4 and 5 students at level 1 in English language arts and is establishing ways of improving their performance.

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.

Leaders and teachers make good use of regularly measured assessment data to monitor student performance. They use disaggregated data from State tests and Acuity assessments to understand what students know and can do. The principal and her staff assess student achievement which is aligned to the State curriculum. However, assessment events are not held sufficiently frequently to track progress continuously. Consequently administrators and staff are unable to maintain a constantly updated understanding of students' ever-changing progress over time.

Administrators evaluate progress among students, classrooms, grades and subjects. They monitor progress of special educational students, English language learners and other subgroups of interest to them. They do this to ensure all students and groups of students are progressing satisfactorily. School leaders are aware that boys underachieve compared with girls. They have identified that higher-achieving students do not always progress to or remain at level 4 and have made this a priority for school improvement. Literacy development is another school priority.

The principal is determined to improve the school's academic outcomes. She and her staff compare the school's performance with higher achieving schools. They visit these schools to identify best practice. Teachers refine such practices in order to emulate them in their own classrooms. Teachers find training and professional development in the use of the school's new data management system to be very helpful in informing planning and instruction.

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 principal and her staff have not established a routine for setting objectively measurable benchmarks, based on student achievement, at frequent intervals through the year. As a result, teachers are not, systematically, establishing each student's next learning step. Students are making progress towards demanding but achievable end of year goals but teachers remain unassured that progress is sufficiently rapid to achieve these goals. A small number of students achieve level 4 but then slip back. Administrators and faculty provide good support for students in need of improvement. Student progress from level 1 to level 2 is at least satisfactory. The school is focusing on improving the performance of a group of grade 4 and 5 students who have remained at level 1 in English language arts for over two years. Additional tutoring before and after school and at Saturday school is having a positive impact on the performance of these students.

The school involves students and their parents in the process of establishing what each student needs to do to meet her or his next learning goal. Teachers note that students are "excited and enthusiastic to be in school and are eager to learn". Regular progress

reports inform parents of their children's progress in all subjects and how it can be improved. The school uses celebrations, such as an awards night in February and showcase events, to attract larger numbers of parents into school and explain how student progress can be further supported and encouraged. Parents are not routinely asked for information that may help the school identify needs and adapt instructional plans or practices to accelerate student learning.

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 principal and her staff have developed a curriculum that is broad and interesting and includes art, dance, drama and music. There are good opportunities for students to reinforce and extend their learning in after school programs. An instrumental program teaches students to play the violin, recorder and guitar while others attend a modern dance and ballet program. Students also learn African drumming and dancing. Students enjoy performing and parents appreciate seeing their children succeed.

Administrators hold teachers accountable for the quality of their instruction and the progress of students in their charge. Teachers are enthusiastic about improving their planning and instructional skills. There is some very good instruction which is differentiated to meet the needs of learners and challenges them to improve their progress. This good practice is inconsistent across the school, however. In some classrooms the pace is slow and higher-achieving students, who have completed their latest assignment, wait patiently for the next activity while the teacher works with others who need more help.

The principal uses student achievement data to make good decisions on how resources are allocated to support student achievement and meet school goals. Classroom sizes are small and many classrooms have two teachers. An atmosphere of mutual trust and respect pervades this calm, nurturing and well-ordered learning environment. Teachers are encouraged to speak to all students, including those they do not teach. The attendance and punctuality of many students is good. However, not all students attend regularly and gain little benefit from opportunities available to them to promote their learning and achievement. The school is making determined and successful efforts to improve the attendance of these students.

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 and her assistants have planned an effective program, based on student data, to ensure teachers learn the planning, instructional and assessment skills they need to challenge students to ever higher achievement. The program is refined to meet the differing needs of individual teachers. Teachers take good advantage of frequent opportunities available to them to visit each other's classrooms, observe instruction and discuss the advantages of different approaches. Relationships among teachers are good and there is an atmosphere of trust and support among the school staff. Teachers

who are new to the school or the profession describe their induction to the school as “very supportive in getting organized and working with students and parents.”

Clear and effective procedures are used consistently to promote a highly ordered learning environment. The school has created a range of partnerships to support students’ academic and personal growth. The Prospect Park Audubon Center conducts workshops where students learn about the living environment. The center holds workshops to train teachers to use scientific investigations in their instruction. The Black Championship Rodeo use rodeo arts to promote positive self image and self confidence. The Brooklyn District Attorney sponsors a Legal Lives Program and students have the opportunity to visit the Brooklyn Court House and observe a trial in progress. Members of staff from the District Attorney’s office come to school explain the legal system at local and State levels. Students also enjoy visits to Broadway theatres, New York museums and trips to Philadelphia and other historic sites.

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 principal is taking decisive and effective action to drive the school towards higher achievement. She carries the school community with her in this endeavor. Plans for improving student outcomes are effective and there are good indications, from recent social studies State tests for example, that achievement is beginning to improve substantially. School leaders are using disaggregated data to find where students made errors in tests and how such mistakes can be avoided in future.

The school is using data effectively to identify where improvements can be made in programs, structures and procedures. Following poor outcomes in last year’s State tests, leaders and faculty made a number of improvements when mapping out the current school year. These included changes in the literacy framework to increase the allotted time spent on reading comprehension and writing, designating certain days with an instructional focus in English language arts, math and science. The math program was modified to include the use of the Scott Foreman Math Program. In addition, all classes in grades 1 through 6 now have science lab time. Also, the program was changed to include one period for art education and one period for math games. Although the school makes substantial programming changes, there is little evidence of a routine for identifying where improvements can be made. In-year review does not systematically identify the need for improvement and refinements are not made immediately.

The school community shares a vision of school improvement and has established the means to do this. The school is systematically improving the quality of teaching. Instruction is becoming more consistently challenging with a greater focus on differentiation to meet the needs of all students. In this way the school expects to raise achievement across all subjects, particularly at levels 3 and 4.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Rachel Jean Mitchell 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