



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Ovington School

Elementary School 176

**1225 69th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11219**

Principal: Elizabeth Culkin

Dates of review: October 22 - 23, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Anne Evanoff

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Ovington School is an elementary school with 1108 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 18% Hispanic, 30% White, and 50% Asian students and 2% Black. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys and girls are equally represented in the school's population. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 96%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding at a rate of 70%.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal works collaboratively with staff to use data to identify key skills and content areas that require improvement on state tests.
- The principal makes good use of specialist staff to analyze data to identify the strengths and weaknesses of special education and English language students.
- The school uses technology effectively for tracking student performance in math.
- There is mutual trust and respect among students, staff and parents resulting in positive attitudes and good behavior.
- The principal plans and provides some good quality professional development activities that align with curriculum priorities.
- Many opportunities are available for new teachers to visit other classrooms and observe best practices to help improve their instruction.
- Parents are warmly welcomed and feel comfortable in sharing information about their children with the staff.
- Procedures are in place to monitor student attendance and to follow up on habitual absenteeism to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn.
- The support of several community agencies enables the school to provide a rich and broad curriculum both inside and outside the regular school day.

What the school needs to improve

- Use data more effectively to develop measurable, specific goals to create a focus for improvement in core areas and share those goals with all stakeholders.
- Provide staff development on how to better use data to set targets, regularly monitor student performance, and adjust instruction.
- Build the capacity of staff to measure progress against interim goals to ensure that teaching strategies are aligned with the learning needs of students.
- Ensure all teachers use data to differentiate instruction, to better engage students in meaningful learning and to use feedback to improve their work.
- Monitor the progress of student subgroups, including special education students, classes and grades, more closely to ensure that students are learning and achieving from one year to the next.

Part 3: Main findings

Progress made since the last review

Since the previous Quality Review, the school has made some progress.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Staff, students and parents are proud of their school and share a sense of community and pride. Partnerships with community groups are strong and well established. As a result, a broad and varied range of exciting learning opportunities enriches and extends student learning both inside and outside the school day. Students' enjoyment of school is reflected in the high attendance rates and their good behavior and the mutual respect between staff and students creates a positive learning environment. The school has worked hard and successfully in building a strong partnership with parents who are made welcome in school if they wish to discuss the learning needs of their children. Teachers new to the school or profession are supported well and given many opportunities to learn from colleagues through visiting classrooms. Since the last review, the principal has made good use of specialist staff and the improvement team to analyze an extensive bank of data in both language and math and then to find ways of organizing this data more efficiently. To that end, the team has instigated several workshops: a data analysis and interpretation session to build the staff's capacity in using ARIS and the ACUITY results and a workshop on using data to differentiate instruction. The goal is to build the confidence and ability of staff in using data effectively to drive instruction and learning. However, this is work in progress. The Inquiry Team has made progress in identifying English language learners who need to improve in the core areas and have begun planning interventions. There has been a school wide focus on identifying key weaknesses in core content areas in order to improve planning in those curricular areas.

Teachers engage in grade conferences on a regular basis to discuss student progress, to plan and to offer each other support in managing curriculum priorities. They participate in other professional development activities that focus on computers in the classroom. With the hiring of a technology specialist, the school is moving forward in installing software to better track student progress in math, promoting the use of ARIS data profiles for monitoring student achievement in the core subjects and developing its website. The principal is beginning to deepen the school's focus on the use of data by carefully examining the performance of students in the subgroups on the State tests but this process is at an early stage.. To ensure the staff has the capacity to use this data for more effective instructional planning, the team has planned additional training sessions to support teachers in setting targets for individuals or groups of students, in monitoring and measuring interim goals and in adjusting teaching strategies and interventions to ensure student growth. The school recognizes that it still has some way to go to ensure that the utilization of data is used in the best way to accelerate the learning of all students.

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 has an abundance of data from many different sources in language and math: Princeton Review, Gain's Report, State tests, Math Benchmarks and a variety of other formal and informal assessments. The school is sufficiently analyzing the data to provide support for students who are not achieving well in each of the subgroups. For example, the Special Education Team reviews the data to identify those students at risk and to provide additional support such as push in or pull out in special education or to place students in classrooms where co-teaching is available. They liaise with teachers to monitor for referrals. Other staff use the test results to place students who are not learning into "morning tutorial" or after school programs. The English as a Second Language Teacher uses a similar process for English language learners to determine a level of need and to assign an appropriate level of service.

There is no shortage of data but there are some shortfalls in terms of how the school uses the data to understand the learning needs of all students. There is no consistent practice to identify student needs, to set targets, to drive instruction or to assess progress. In relation to comparing past performance, the school is currently in transition. It is moving from using one set of assessment tools to another; for example, Teacher's College data is replacing data once collected from ECLAS. The school does not formally compare its performance and progress data to similar schools that are achieving at a higher level. The school also recognizes the need to ensure that teachers benefit from good quality training in how to utilize data to inform instruction because at present there are weaknesses in this key area.

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's Comprehensive Education Plan outlines goals for improvement in student achievement in reading, writing and math. However, the goals are not easily measured or tracked because they are written in too general a way. The plan does not identify the number of students that the school intends to move from one level to the next in any of the core subject areas. As a result, teachers lack direction in flagging up which students need to move forward and in what subject areas. Plans are in hand to utilize ARIS to help them identify learning needs and to guide and inform instruction for all students and classes. The principal is aware that certain subgroups did not achieve well on the last State tests and she has given the Inquiry Team the responsibility of identifying a focus group made up of students in the greatest need for improvement. They have administered effective running records and writing assessments to develop baseline information about students' strengths and weaknesses in writing and math and are setting targets for improvement. This is a good example of staff working together as a team to identify specific student learning needs and then looking at strategies to accelerate their progress.

The school does not yet share specific whole schools for academic improvement with staff and parents but does share more general improvement goals: for example, staff is aware that differentiation will be a focus this year and the Parent Association knows that grade

four students will receive a new science curriculum. Students in some classes have set goals in reading and work hard to progress to the next level but this good practice is not consistent enough across the school. Although some staff provide verbal and written comments to students related to the quality of their work and students conference with their teachers on how to improve it, there is some inconsistency in this practice. Parents feel they can communicate easily and readily with the school to exchange information about their children and offer as much support as they can.

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 State standards drive the curriculum in the school and provide teachers with a focus for their daily lessons. Grade teachers meet on a regular basis to review achievement data on their students. The school has put in place strategies to enhance the quality of instruction. It has adopted a workshop approach in teaching reading and writing that includes a professional development component with the Teachers’ College. This program is working well because it encourages parents and students to read and write together every evening for twenty minutes. Parents see improvement in the quality of their children’s work and in their interest in reading. The school is taking similar steps in math with a focus on using the computer to assess and monitor student progress regularly. Students’ learning benefits from an engaging and broad curriculum that incorporates the arts, such as chorus band, jazz band, movie making, dance, visual arts and puppetry. These options generate considerable engagement and excitement and enable many of the students to excel in these areas.

The school uses data to identify students with special learning needs and students who are struggling with language development and then monitor their progress sufficiently to ensure that ongoing improvement is occurring. Special education teachers, English language teachers and classroom teachers along with the academic intervention service (AIS) specialists and math coach meet to examine the data in more depth, set targets for improvement and identify teaching strategies that make a difference. The principal is monitoring the progress of these students very carefully to ensure that no one falls between the cracks. The principal recognizes that the good practice of utilizing data to match work to students’ individual needs is not yet evident in enough classes. As a result, she has identified differentiation as a whole school goal and has planned professional development to ensure that all teachers develop a good understanding of how to meet the learning needs of students of differing abilities.

Students say that they “love coming to school,” and feel comfortable asking for help. There is a strong bond of mutual respect between staff and students and these are key factors in why attendance is very high. Parents see the school as an extension of home where staff “go above and beyond the call of duty to make a positive difference” for their children.

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 visits classrooms and provides feedback. The school's coaches and subject specialists are highly involved with teachers and visit classrooms on a regular basis to coach and model exemplary practices. The school's involvement in Teachers' College Project is having an impact on instruction, especially in writing. The school uses a research based math program well to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual students and to develop teacher competency in the use of assessment data. There is considerable support for new teachers and a sense of teamwork. New teachers visit other classrooms to observe their colleagues and engage in "lunch and learn" sessions to explore best practices and plan lessons. They have also been meeting with their same grade partners to plan lessons in subject areas such as science. The principal has not yet developed a schedule for interclass visitations for experienced teachers either within the school or with similar schools.

The school functions smoothly on a daily basis and there are very few discipline or behavior problems. The principal has effective intervention strategies to provide good support for students and employs a social worker, guidance counselor, and nurses to address the social and emotional needs of students. However, there are no stated goals for these students and their progress is not monitored. Bullying workshops provided by the school have successfully added to the feeling of well being that students describe. Some good quality professional development activities that have taken place have followed on from areas of weakness identified in the data. This school has many partnerships with local community groups and businesses that enrich the curriculum and enhance student experiences. As a result, the school is able to provide an after school program that is rich in the arts and extends the range of opportunities for students to develop their talents.

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 principal is waiting for ARIS and the predictive assessment results to provide the school with much needed information to help set both whole school and interim goals. She has a keen awareness of the importance of developing a strategic plan with specific goals against which the school monitors and evaluates its progress and effectiveness at regular intervals. In tracking scaled scores in the core subjects using ARIS data, the school will be in a better position to monitor student progress. Last year, because the school did not have periodic assessment results, they were unable to identify that some students were not going to maintain their performance at levels 2 and 3 in English language arts or that some special education students were not improving enough. Results in math were much better because staff tracked student progress more effectively.

The principal realizes that the school does not use data from periodic assessments as effectively as they should to revise school plans to improve student learning. She is in the process of putting benchmark assessments in place such as Accelerated Reader and Math Solutions that will allow the school to respond immediately with appropriate

interventions when students require such actions. On the other hand, the school is better able to respond to the learning needs of special education students and English language learners because staff monitor and track them more closely. The school has yet to use data from one year to the next to establish measurable goals and confidently use outcomes to drive the next stage of planning or to achieve its vision of success for every student.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Ovington School	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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		