



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The John L. Steptoe School of the 21st Century**

**Primary School 181  
1023 New York Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11203**

**Principal: Dr. Lowell Coleman**

**Dates of review: October 9 - 11, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Peter Birks**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The John L. Steptoe School of the 21st Century is an elementary school with 1,220 students from K through grade 8. The school population comprises 91% Black, 7% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 9% 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 91%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 74% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school reviews and updates constantly its knowledge and understanding of the performance and progress of individual students.
- The school uses its performance data well to identify patterns of student performance and progress.
- The school leaders are developing a professionally healthy school spirit of personal accountability.
- The school budgetary focus links securely to school priorities established through its data analysis.
- The school monitors effectively student attendance and punctuality patterns and rewards very good patterns of attendance and punctuality.
- Classroom observations by school leaders and teacher colleagues are consistent in reinforcing a policy of differentiated planning and teaching.
- Teachers new to the profession receive clear direction and support.
- The school operates efficiently to encourage student learning and to maintain high levels of discipline.
- School leaders track the outcomes of student performance and use the information, where necessary, to modify strategic decisions.
- The principal provides a clear vision for the school and his cabinet supports him well.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop strategies to identify more formally, patterns of performance of different student groups according to gender, ethnicity and other categories.
- Identify similar schools and organize data to generate comparisons.
- Devise ways to increase parent and caregivers' participation in the school's work.
- Ensure greater consistency in the way that teachers use data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction.
- Develop a more rigorous use of data to support the professional development goals of individual and groups of teachers.

## 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.**

The John L. Steptoe School for the 21st Century is going through a period of intense educational development. The principal, well supported by his cabinet, is implementing a transition towards a school vision of higher student outcomes. The school is effecting this vision at great pace. The impact on the school is to change many of the previous ways of working in the school and to raise the standards of student performance and progress.

Developments are taking place that change how the school analyzes and uses the comprehensive and sometimes complex compilations of data that are now available. The school reviews and continually updates its knowledge and understanding of the performance and progress of individual students. Through this analysis it identifies more accurately both the needs of individual students and broader patterns of student performance. The school does not compare its performance with similar schools and this is an area for improvement.

The school budgetary plans link directly to the priorities identified by the school's academic data analysis. School leaders and staff are developing a renewed understanding and commitment to their personal responsibility for student performance and progression. Teachers new to the profession receive clear direction and support.

Progress from the previous review has been good. The school collaborative inquiry committee met for the first time in spring 2007. It meets now on a regular basis and is managing the flow of data with increasing confidence.

### 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 teachers are becoming increasingly skilful in collecting and analyzing data to show the performance and progress of individual students. The Kaplan electronic data analysis program has proved to be a valuable asset in this work. Teachers are able to use the data that the program produces, under the guidance of the testing coordinator. They align this information with citywide test results and their own informal assessments to monitor both the current performance and progress of their students, and their past performance. The experience with the Kaplan program will undoubtedly enhance the ease with which the school may adapt to the new city ARIS program for monitoring student performance and progression.

The school screens and monitors carefully special education students and those students for whom English is not their first language. Customized programs are well prepared. The assistant principal ensures that the teachers and the students follow these programs. The school does not yet identify patterns of student performance and progression according to more formal groupings such as gender and ethnicity nor does it compare itself with similar schools. These are areas for improvement.

Teachers recognize the value of the new strategies for managing school data. A well-focused, collaborative approach has developed and is supported by the work of the school collaborative inquiry team. Teachers receive sound guidance to inform their planning and instruction through the combined support of their colleagues, the school cabinet, grade leaders, subject coaches and the testing coordinator. Consultants from the Kaplan program have provided further training and guidance. Teachers are becoming more comfortable with the use of well-analyzed data as a tool for more differentiated instruction.

The assistant principals monitor conscientiously the performance and progress of students in the area of the school for which they have particular responsibility. They share this information with the principal and the school cabinet to consider the further needs of teachers for development and support. This works effectively.

**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 school uses the data collected on each individual student effectively to focus on their performance and progress, and particularly on those students in greatest need of improvement. The administration organizes common planning time for all teachers and they use this time effectively to collaborate on planning their goals for improvement. Grade leaders make a significant contribution to the joint planning meetings and the teachers make increasingly good use of the data to plan differentially for their lessons. The continued development of differentiated work in the classrooms reflects the benefit of these procedures. The curriculum committee meets monthly to discuss the data patterns for each subject area and subject coaches visit classrooms to offer useful guidance and sometimes to model lessons.

Each assistant principal works with groups of teachers in a number of grades. Their role is to monitor and support the teachers’ planning. This enables the school leaders to retain good firsthand knowledge of developments and to identify developing patterns of need. The assistant principals work efficiently and the standard of differentiated planning and student performance is rising.

The school takes steps to share information with parents and caregivers about the progress of their children and the goals that the school is setting for them. The administration sends letters home in an appropriate language, teachers make telephone calls if a student is not doing well, and they produced a newly designed newsletter very recently. Three times per year, the school invites parents and caregivers to make a formal visit to school to discuss the performance and progress of their children. The response rate from parents and caregivers to these steps taken by the school is quite low. The school recognizes the importance of parental or caregiver involvement in the education of their children and that this is an area for further development.

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

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

The school gathers much meaningful, interim data about the performance and progress of students through its extensive use of the Kaplan program and the creative approach to its analysis taken by the test coordinator, who is also the school data manager. The resulting data enables the school to offer targets for improvement for all students and to provide advanced challenges for its high performing students.

Within the planning by teachers the school is promoting, with some degree of initial success, an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning. Arising from the vision of the principal, “I strongly believe in integrated instruction,” and with the support of the school’s approach to the use of monitoring data, integrated approaches are in evidence in the classrooms linking math, music and science. This has a beneficial effect on student learning styles. The assistant principals monitor the effect of this approach and demonstrate that it has contributed to improvement in English language arts performance.

The use of the Kaplan program has assuaged the fears of many teachers about the unattractiveness of statistical analysis as an aid to their planning. The teachers demonstrate an appreciation of the value of the regularity and accuracy of the information they receive. They can demonstrate how the creative use of data use can lead to acceleration in students’ learning. Similarly, students now have a clearer understanding of their level of performance and the interim steps to take in order to progress. This has led to a change in styles for some teachers and for some a dynamic change in classroom procedures. Nevertheless there is still variation and some inconsistency in the differentiated instruction seen in some classrooms. This is an area for further improvement.

The school has alert procedures to regulate the punctuality and attendance patterns of students. There are incentives for those students with particularly good records. The school pursues all unofficial absences diligently, resulting in attendance levels that are above those found in schools citywide.

**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.**

All members of the school cabinet undertake classroom observations. The school uses them well as a significant and effective way to promote change and to support colleagues. Informal intervisitations by teachers are a good support to the school’s promotion of an open and reflective professional environment. Coaches also model lessons for colleagues to observe. The information gathered from all these styles of classroom observation helps to create useful agendas for workshops and grade conferences.

The analysis of whole school data on student performance and progression largely drives the professional development decisions in the school, whether they are group

development activities or activities chosen specifically for an individual teacher. There is a constant and clear overall school focus on the development of differentiation in planning and of more group work in classrooms to accelerate the learning of students. This has had beneficial effects on the changes to teaching styles in the school and on the pace of progress of students. The school does not use data sufficiently rigorously to identify and target more precisely the professional development goals of particular individuals and groups of teachers to promote greater consistency. This is an area for further development.

The school provides clear direction and good support to teachers new to the profession. This extends also to teachers who are changing the grade in which they teach, and teachers who may be experienced but who are new to this school. The assistant principals provide useful workshops and, along with the data manager, act as mentors.

The school operates effectively to promote good learning experiences for its students. The school has good access to a guidance counselor, social worker and youth worker. There are clear routines for dealing with disciplinary issues and security is good. The principal makes good contacts with outside agencies to promote recognition of the school and its achievements.

**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.**

The school has established a shared commitment and enthusiasm for the regular evaluation of school data as a means of accelerating the learning of students and raising their levels of performance. The school is embedding this process successfully into the school culture. This focus has led to important and beneficial changes to the way that teachers plan, to the style of organization in classrooms and to the acceleration of student learning. The school accurately charts the impact of this approach upon the performance of students and the improvements are clear. During this intensive period of change, there is variation in how skillfully the administration and teachers use their interim goals to revise plans and to make adjustments. It will be important to ensure greater consistency in the way that teachers use their data to plan for and then to provide differentiated instruction.

The role of the Collaborative Inquiry Team is becoming increasingly important as the school develops diagnostic measures to improve the way in which students can enhance the pace of their learning and secure higher outcomes. The team already manages well the generation and interpretation of school data and is building effectively on this experience. Their approach is robust and very well focused on their responsibilities.

The principal provides a clear vision for the school and his cabinet supports him well. The school is managing effectively the transition to a more flexible, enriched school curriculum supported by a full understanding of and commitment to differentiated planning and instruction in the classroom. Regular classroom visits and analysis of the performance and progress of students monitor the impact of this thrust. Both the results of the visits and the performance of the students show that the school has made good progress in this transition.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The John L. Steptoe School of the 21st Century</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			X		

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				X	

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

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

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				<b>X</b>	