



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Clarion School

Elementary School 205

**6701 20th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11204**

Principal: Beth Garter

Dates of review: December 12 - 14, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Martin Newell

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

Overall evaluation

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Clarion School is an elementary school with 810 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 17% Hispanic, 35% White, and 47% Asian students. The student body includes 35% English language learners and 15% 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 95%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 77% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a very effective leader who is the driving force behind the school's quest for excellence.
- School leaders form a dynamic team where individual skills are used to best effect to impact on student learning.
- The school collects a wide array of relevant data which is put to good use to rigorously evaluate student progress as well as performance.
- The outcomes of data analysis are used well to bring about changes in practice at many levels that lead to better learning.
- Much instruction makes good use of data to make learning challenging but fun and to motivate and enthuse students in equal measure.
- The curriculum is underpinned by innovative learning programs and an exciting array of enrichment activities.
- Very good attention is given to where the individual skills of staff can be best utilized for their impact on student progress.
- The school is a harmonious and inclusive place where the diversity of culture, ethnicity and need is fully embraced and celebrated.
- Students are very well behaved, love coming to school, have a genuine voice and share a strong bond of mutual respect with staff.
- The strong links with parents, strengthened by the many workshops, enables parents to be true partners in their child's learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the progress of the higher-achieving students is measured and evaluated as rigorously as that of other groups of students.
- Further drill down into data to analyze how well students are progressing in different strands of subjects.
- Ensure that all teachers emulate the practice of many in how data is utilized to drive instruction and accelerate the learning of students.
- Provide students with more personalized targets and give them a greater say in setting their own goals.

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 school has moved on at a pace since the last review. Because it has tackled the identified issues with rigor and determination, the school is a better place than it was and students' learning is becoming increasingly accelerated. At the heart of the school's success lie the leadership skills and steely determination of the principal. She is committed to taking the school on to the next level and shows no let up in the pace of change to help this become a reality. She is very well supported by a leadership team who contribute much to the school's many successes because their diverse skills are utilized very effectively in ensuring that students do well.

This is a school that recognizes the potential of data utilization as a powerful tool for bringing about improvement at many different levels. Key to this is the school's commitment to evaluating and measuring student progress as well as performance by criteria such as gender, ethnicity, subject, grade and class. The work being carried out by the inquiry team is innovative and incisive and is already impacting well on the learning of identified groups of students. The school rightly recognizes that a sharper focus has to be given to how well the higher-achieving students are progressing. Data collection is becoming increasingly sophisticated but the 'drilling down' process does not yet extend to an analysis of how well students are doing within strands of subjects. It is no coincidence that good instruction and good learning produce a winning combination. Much instruction is challenging and engaging, and hooks and maintains the interest and motivation of students. Many teachers make good use of data to match work to the differing achievement of the students, although this strong practice is not yet present in every class. Teachers are adept and effective in making students aware of the levels they are working at and what they need to improve their work but the setting of personalized targets or of students setting their own goals is not embedded across the school.

There are other factors that help make the school what it is, not least the tangible sense of harmony and inclusivity that is at the core of the school's work. There is great diversity in terms of ethnicity and special education needs, but at this school the uniqueness of the individual is recognized, respected and celebrated. The lively and vibrant curriculum with its wide array of enrichment activities enthuses the students and helps bring learning to life. The role students play should not be underestimated because their very good behavior, contagious enthusiasm and fervent desire to do well are significant factors in creating a culture that is fully conducive to effective learning. Parents greatly value and appreciate the quality of education provided and the school goes the extra mile in keeping them informed about the life of the school, their child's progress and in helping them to be partners in their child's success. When all of these strengths are put together it is clear to see that the school is well placed to continue in its drive and quest for excellence.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

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

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school collects and collates a wide array of test and assessment data through State and City tests but also through its own interim assessments which it carries out four times a year. A key strength is that the school recognizes the importance of measuring student progress as well as performance. The rigorous manner in which the school analyzes data means that it has a good grasp of how different groups of students are performing and progressing. Key leaders analyze how well students are doing by grade, class and subject. The diverse nature of the school means that there is a range of different ethnicities attending the school as well as special education students with both moderate and complex learning difficulties and disabilities. The school checks closely on the progress of these differing groups of students and importantly identifies any differences and then puts in place strategies to improve both performance and progress. Innovative programs such as Reading Recovery and the strategic use of academic intervention service providers have brought about improvements in reading and writing for many groups of identified students. This work is further strengthened by the very good early impact of the inquiry team who are working with those students whose performance has been identified as a cause for concern. The principal has already organized visits to similar schools that are performing at a higher level to look at exemplars of practice that this school could adopt or adapt to accelerate learners' progress even more.

The principal and school leaders are always looking to take the school to the next level and are relentless in their drive for excellence. It is this determination that has led to the accurate identification of the need to ensure that the progress of the higher achieving students is evaluated with as much rigor as other groups of students. In addition, the school is planning to drill further down into the data to give leaders and teachers a better picture of how students are doing within strands of subjects. This is good practice and is reflective of the school's commitment to keeping one step ahead of the game in analysis and utilization of data and its impact on performance and progress.

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.

This is very much a goal-orientated school and there is a strong recognition that for school goals to be achieved, teachers at all grades and in all subjects must be held accountable for the progress of the students they teach. With this in mind the principal and assistant principals meet with teachers individually to discuss the progress of students in their class. This dialogue has been strengthened by the very good systems that have been introduced for the regular assessment of reading and writing. From these assessments, interim goals are set at intervals throughout the year to help ensure that challenging end-of-year goals are met. Any students who are not on track benefit from immediate intervention strategies. The school keeps careful records of all the services that students access and then evaluates which are having the most significant impact on accelerating student progress. There are signs that the drop in proficiency in English language arts of the higher-

achieving students is showing an upward turn because of the “push in” strategies utilized where the focus has been on developing higher order reading skills.

The principal leads the way in setting high expectations for staff and students. Students respond well and are only too ready to take on board the comments that teachers make on their work as to what is needed to improve or to reach the next level. The areas that are not yet as strong are that targets for students are not always personalized enough to align with their individual achievement and opportunities for students to set their own goals are not frequent enough or well embedded in school practice. A strong partnership has been established between school and parents who greatly appreciate the regular and good quality updates they receive on their children’s progress. This is also very much a two-way street and because staff are so approachable, parents are always ready to provide useful information to teachers about the learning needs and capabilities of their children.

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 bases its curriculum around the systematic development of students’ skills in English language arts, math, science and social studies. The whole-school focus is consistently on looking to improve the performance and progress of all students. But there is more to school than this because, under the highly effective leadership of the principal, staff go the extra mile to provide learning experiences that are both vibrant and challenging. This is helped in no small measure by enrichment activities ranging from boxing to oil painting, from ballet to Italian, with a plethora of musical and sporting activities in between. Add to this trips to theatres, galleries, museums and the opera and it is easy to see why students love coming to school, attendance rates are high and why their knowledge of cultural diversity is so well developed.

There is little doubt that the school is a very safe and inclusive place where harmony among all students abounds. This is because everyone in school, staff and students alike, respect and celebrate the uniqueness of the individual. Teachers are held accountable for the progress of students they teach and much instruction makes good use of data to match work closely to the needs of individual students as well as making learning fun and engaging. However, these strong features are not yet present in all classes. The principal is skilled in the way that she deploys staff to where their skills can be best utilized to impact on student progress. She has molded together a leadership team whose members have differing but equally valuable attributes that are capitalized on to help students make good progress. The purchase of high quality reading books, particularly geared to the interests of boys, and problem solving books in math, derived from weaker aspects of performance highlighted in the school’s analysis of data.

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.

The staff are reflective and always ready to look at ways of improving their performance. The regular formal and informal lesson observations carried out by the principal and

assistant principals provide much valued constructive feedback that has led to improvements in instruction. Equally important is how teachers learn from one another. Shared planning sessions, work sampling, analyzing data by grade and intervisitations between classes are just some examples of how good practice is shared. Teachers also make use of rubrics detailing what is needed to reach certain levels for grade work above and below where they teach- enabling them to get a better grasp of where students have been academically and, importantly, what they need to achieve next. Good quality professional development opportunities are regularly available that meet the need of the school and the individual teacher and often arise out of areas for development identified through data analysis. Although there is some good practice, formal procedures are not in place to ensure that information from these sessions is turnkeyed to all staff. Teachers new to the school or profession quickly settle into school routines and expectations because they are supported and mentored well and are given many good first hand opportunities to see what good instruction looks like. A real sense of calm is evident in the school on a day-to-day basis. Although this is because of the consistency of high expectation set by staff in terms of behavior and courtesy, the role of students should not be overlooked. They play a pivotal role in making the school what it is. They are very well behaved, show great awareness and respect for the beliefs of others and make a telling contribution to the harmonious learning environment that wraps around the whole school.

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 is successful in how it sets whole school goals and progress to three goals is evaluated on a regular basis. Regular interim assessments are carried out by teachers to ensure that students are on track to reach their end of year targets in ELA and math. The target setting in reading and writing is a model of very good practice. The outcomes of these assessments are discussed with cabinet members and there is an expectation that practice may need to be modified for particular students if the expected progress has not been made. There is also flexibility built into the system so that the student composition of reading and writing groups may need to change because of student performance. Many teachers are becoming more confident at utilizing acuity data and realizing its potential as a tool for accelerating student progress. Some teachers are using the information very well to modify practice, provision and instruction strategies that are having a significant impact on student progress as well as performance. The school recognizes that these very good exemplars should set the benchmark for all teachers. School leaders regularly analyze the performance of the school at all levels and set challenging but reachable targets across grades and subjects. This ongoing evaluation is further strengthened by an analysis of what is working best within grades and subjects and within intervention and support strategies. Key to the school's success is the readiness and speed in which strengths and weaknesses identified are acted upon by modifying practice, changing groupings and ensuring staff get to know what is working best. Under the leadership of the principal this is school that is not content to rest on its current successes- instead the bar of expectation just gets set higher in her quest for excellence. A quest shared by an able and committed cabinet who demonstrate the same determination to make good progress for all students the norm and to take the school on to the next higher level

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Clarion 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 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	