



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Dr. Peter Ray

Elementary School 305

**344 Monroe Street
Brooklyn
NY 11216**

Principal: Dr. Julia Mortley

Dates of review: May 21 - 23, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Frank Jones

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Dr. Peter Ray is an elementary school with 425 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 85% Black, 12% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 87.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 81% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has developed detailed comprehensive systems of data collection in math and English language arts.
- Teachers are provided with a wealth of valuable information to enable them to support and target their instruction.
- The school's programs for special education and vulnerable students are good.
- The curriculum and assessments are well linked to state standards enabling accurate judgments on progress and performance to be made.
- Staff are mutually supportive and work well together well.
- Professional development is well targeted to support the implementation of initiatives and meet individual need.
- The school provides a range of enriching experiences that students appreciate and enjoy.
- Under the leadership of the principal and her cabinet the school has made significant and meaningful progress since the last review.
- Targeted intervention strategies for specific students to raise their performance levels.
- The school provides a warm and welcoming learning environment where people are valued and student work celebrated.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the goal setting process by using prior achievement data to set targets for students that include interim measures to assess progress towards them.
- Establish a strategic plan that identifies and incorporates key quantifiable actions required to raise performance in classes', grades and subjects.
- Further develop the expertise and confidence of all staff in data analysis and use to inform instructional strategies and student performance.
- Promote the use of teachers sharing high expectations to all students.

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.

The school has made significant progress in the last year in addressing the issues raised in the last Quality Review. The school has routinely gathered a comprehensive range of data which is analyzed effectively by the cabinet. The relevance and accuracy of the information has improved considerably following the alignment of the curriculum and periodic assessments with state standards. This provides teachers with a wealth of data. Training has made staff more adept at understanding the data they are given but there is still inconsistency in its use and over reliance on the coaches support. The school identifies what each student knows and can do. This information is used to successfully target specific groups of students with interventions and programs to improve their performance. The inquiry team has worked hard with a focus group of students to improve their skills in reading for understanding and meaning. Results to date are variable but the in-depth discussions about learning have improved their professional expertise. As yet insufficient use is made of prior performance data to set specific student goals or produce interim measures to track progress towards them. Staff work well together and enjoy good relationships with students. They in turn value the support they receive and the security this brings. Students speak with enthusiasm about the range and richness that the curriculum offers them both during and after the school day. However, teachers do not share high expectations consistently with all students. Staff have the opportunity to learn from each other. They speak highly of these occasions and the range of professional development opportunities they are afforded. The school is well led by the principal and assistant principal. They are becoming increasingly evaluative and recognize the need to refine the current development plan to identify the key actions required.

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 has developed comprehensive systems for the collection and collation of data at student, grade and subject levels. The school therefore has an extremely clear picture of what each student knows, understands and can do. The school has carefully aligned its assessments to state standards. It uses the information to monitor progress and make comparisons between classes and within grades. Teachers benefit from the

information provided by an item analysis of assessments which is undertaken by the coaches. These indicate the areas where students' understanding is low within a class or across grades. Therefore, teachers are able to adjust their instruction to enable students to grasp the concepts being taught. Ongoing conferencing with students allows teachers to assess understanding and performance. Modification to the curriculum takes place where necessary. The progress and needs of special education students are closely monitored and individual education plans are in place. Student progress is measured and teachers use this information to address specific needs. The progress of the small population of English language learners and held over students is equally well charted. The school disaggregates data according to ethnicity and gender. No discernible patterns emerge from analysis by ethnicity, though the school was able to establish that girls were outperforming boys in English language arts. Following detailed analysis, the school was able to effectively address the situation by altering the type of texts being used. The principal closely measures year-on-year progress. Data shows that there is an upward trend. There is a significant improvement in the number of students achieving Level 3 in English language arts this year, which has narrowed the performance gap with math. Comparisons with similar schools are robust. Where data illustrates a high level of achievement in another school, the principal investigates the reasons why to see if the skills are transferable. Teachers have received data training. Good use is made of the coaches to increase the level of data understanding and application across the school. As a result, teacher confidence in data handling is improving but they feel there is still a need for continued support.

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 sets goals that are displayed in the building and communicated to parents. The cabinet put in place a more detailed program of goals, some of which are time scaled. In neither case do goals relate directly to raising performance and therefore lack rigor as a tool to measure student achievement. The school identifies students who perform at just below grade level and provide focused support for them. The positive impact is seen in the increase in the percentage of students who improve their performance. Class-based assessment of student need, including conferencing, takes place. Teachers are therefore able to adjust programs and set incremental learning goals for students. This careful monitoring enables the progress of each student to be scrutinized and support put in place if problems arise. Data is used well to identify low-performing students such as those in danger of being held over. The academic intervention service provides a comprehensive package of skilled support for these and other vulnerable students. Targeted interventions are put in place and carefully monitored until success has been achieved. Teacher expectation of student potential is inconsistent in some classes. Students report that at times, "The work is too easy." When students are challenged to explore and extend their thinking, as in one grade 5 English language arts class, performance is good. However, on occasion students are engaged in tasks that are insufficiently challenging for them and their progress suffers. Parents state that they are kept well informed about the progress of their children and the curriculum that will be taught. The principal regularly communicates with them by letter and a calendar of events describes the activities taking place. The use of workshops enables parents to gain further understanding of the learning process.

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

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The curriculum is rich and varied, providing opportunities for students to benefit from the experiences available. The school has worked hard to align carefully the core curriculum to state standards. Therefore, they are able to identify accurately the performance of all students and classes. Interim assessments to measure understanding similarly reflect state standards. This enables teachers to measure progress. Where students are identified as underperforming, teaching occurs or further interventions are provided. Students speak with enthusiasm about the wider curriculum and the after-school program. The opportunities to engage in the creative arts, music and sports activities enrich and enhance the experiences of the student body. Data is carefully analyzed by the principal and coaches to provide an in-depth understanding of what is happening across the school. This information informs conversations with teachers to hold them accountable for individual and class performance. Advice and support is subsequently provided to help teachers improve their practice. Use of data to inform differentiated instruction is improving but is sometimes inconsistent in its application across the school. The principal uses the budget wisely to improve instruction and learning. Smart boards and other technology have been incrementally introduced to improve the scope of learning. Consultants and professional developers assist when areas for development have been identified. As a result, support is closely targeted at identified need.

Relationships at all levels and between all groups are extremely positive. Students relate well to their teachers and appreciate the support and understanding that is always readily available for them both during the school day and at other times. As one student said, “They are there for us.” The celebration of student work throughout the school reflects a warm and purposeful learning environment where students feel safe, secure and valued. The school has worked hard to improve attendance and currently there is an upward trend, though figures for previous years remain disappointing.

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 cabinet engages in formal and informal classroom observations on a regular basis. They are consequently well aware of the strengths and development areas of each member of staff. Staff welcome these visits and the focused support that follows. Teachers are given written developmental feedback with specific goals for improvement. Professional development is frequently linked to these areas. Thus, staff have the opportunity to further develop their professional skills and knowledge. Staff were asked in a survey to identify their own needs. This self-evaluation proved a useful exercise in targeting assistance. New initiatives, such as the introduction of smart board technology, are accompanied by training. This ensures teachers are aware and

knowledgeable about of their potential and confident in their use. Teachers appreciate the benefits of daily planning time when they are able to discuss strategies to improve their own and student performance. Expert sheets, which identify specific strengths of each teacher, are shared amongst staff. These are used to focus intervisitations so teachers can observe good practice applicable to their needs. A teacher new to the school was extremely positive about the quality of support she received from the math coach saying, "She does so much more to help me than just being a mentor." This reflects the mutually supportive nature of administrators and staff.

Good support systems are in place across the school to help all students. When issues arise, the cause is quickly identified. Multi-disciplinary services and parents are involved to facilitate interventions that successfully address the problem. The school operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis and supports a culture where learning can take place. Staff did comment however, on the need for more consistency in dealing with inappropriate behavior when it occurred. An increasingly wide range of community links provides partnerships to improve students' personal and academic development. The male initiative program Rise to the Occasion provides role models for boys to emulate. This helps them to realize the importance and value, of achievement. The school arts program has benefited from support from the 42nd Street Development Corporation that provides the Music and Brain keyboard program.

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's collection and analysis of data has improved and so has its ability to evaluate its progress. The data enables the school to have a clear picture of the strengths and areas for development of each subject and teacher. The careful analysis of this data allows the school to be proactive in amending plans. This was particularly evident when analysis of the existing literacy program demonstrated that it was not meeting the needs of the students. The new program for grades 2 through 5 has been much more effective in raising achievement. As a result, more focused learning takes place. The school has ongoing assessment data to set interim goals but insufficient use is made of this. Teachers are becoming practiced at adapting the curriculum to meet identified needs within the classroom through conferencing and good use of the detailed assessments they make. Teachers benefit from individual goals designed to improve their performance. These are supported by professional development and adjusted so their practice and knowledge continues to improve. Close attention is paid to monitoring the impact of programs for special education and low achieving students. The school has been successful in supporting these groups especially through the work of the academic intervention service for those students in danger of not graduating. There has also been a significant increase in students achieving grade level as a result of class-based focus on individual need and the implementation of targeted interventions. The school makes very good use of the information it has during the annual retreat prior to the start of each new academic year. It is at this time that a detailed evaluation of the previous year takes place and focused plans for the next year are discussed and developed. The principal uses this time to articulate clearly her vision. This gives direction and purpose to the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Dr Peter Ray 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