



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

PS/IS 323

Elementary/Middle School 323

**210 Chester Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Linda Harris

Dates of review: April 9 - 10, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Sandra Tweddell

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

PS/IS 323 is an elementary/middle school with 548 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 85% Black, 13% Hispanic, 0.3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 19.3% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 89.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, cabinet and teachers have developed a positive culture in which students are valued as individuals and gain high self-esteem.
- Data is collected and analyzed well to determine which students are succeeding and which need support.
- Students and many parents are very clear about the high expectations that the principal has for students at the school.
- The principal has a strong presence around the school and her feedback to teachers is greatly appreciated.
- Attendance has risen this year because of a determined approach that uses rigorous procedures.
- The attractive learning environment and the mutual respect that runs throughout the school support the positive culture.
- Excellent partnerships with a wide range of agencies enhance the quality of learning for students.
- The budget is used strategically to focus resources on areas identified as needing development.
- The provision of a laptop for each teacher has supported their understanding and analysis of data.
- Parental involvement in school has increased because of the flexible arrangement of meetings.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all teachers differentiate instruction, especially for students who are capable of achieving highly.
- Develop further strategies to motivate boys in order to close the achievement gap between them and girls.
- Increase the confidence of teachers to use interim assessments to refine goals for students and then for the whole school.
- Develop the process of setting goals for students so they understand what they need to do to achieve their goals and how well they are progressing.
- Implement a consistent approach to utilizing data on student performance to inform teachers' planning.

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 principal is driven by the goal of enabling each student to aim for high school and college and she has successfully created a culture in which students want to come to school and enjoy learning. Students, parents and many teachers report that the school offers a safe environment in which students feel valued and can learn. The support of guidance counselors and deans is invaluable in creating this culture. Parents who take advantage of the many opportunities to be involved with the school, and many students, are aware of the high standards set by the principal. Students are proud of their school and express this in their cheerful greetings to teachers and one another and in the pride they take in wearing their school uniform.

The principal is a strategic leader. Since the last review, the school has established systems that have significantly improved the use of data. The impact of this is seen in rising attendance and more students moving from Level 1 to higher levels of State tests. The principal maintains a clear overview of data across the school and teachers carefully analyze what data is telling them about each student. The inquiry team's work on students at risk is beginning to be disseminated across the school and to extend its focus to other groups of students who are not succeeding. Teachers use their analyses well to group students and many are starting to differentiate instruction in the classroom, although as this is new to the school, there is inevitable inconsistency in practice. Professional development is targeted effectively on differentiated instruction and the impact of this is evident in many classrooms. Monthly progress reports to parents keep them and their children, informed about the progress students make. Many students understand their goals, but not as many understand how they are to reach them. The school data shows that the difference in achievement between boys and girls is still too great, despite some work that has been done to start to close the gap. Other work has begun to ensure that the highest performers do as well as they can. This is inconsistent and students report that they sometimes finish work early and are not always given work that deepens their knowledge.

The school wide goals set are realistic and firmly based on the analysis of data. They are beginning to be reviewed each quarter for progress. The cabinet is aware that this process needs to be refined so that all teachers use interim assessments with more confidence. Progress since the last review has been good. Goals for improvement have been established and systems to measure progress towards them are in place. Plans have interim targets that are revised but more needs to be done to revise plans more quickly in response to the data. Data is starting to be used to measure the impact of professional development. The systems that have developed over this year are appropriate and the school is well placed to embed them into its practice.

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.

Each teacher has good records of how well students are progressing, based on State tests and their own interim assessments. Each week, a skill is tested and the principal monitors this. The principal uses the information to disaggregate data about groups of students, such as the increasing gap in achievement between boys and girls. The school takes in a large number of students in grade 6, many of whom enter at well below grade level standard. This group has been targeted for support. Quarterly assessments are plotted to see the gains that students have made and the principal displays this information in her office. Generally, there is inconsistency in how teachers use the data from interim assessments to differentiate instruction. Special education students are a focus of the inquiry team.

The principal uses data from the last few years to judge how well the school is doing and also compares the progress with similar schools. This analysis is supported effectively by visits and discussion with fellow principals. Teachers have been involved in formal and informal professional development to understand data and they are greatly supported by each having a computer that enabling them to access information readily. As a result, some teachers are becoming more confident in interpreting the data and some are highly skilled.

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 management structures are used effectively to involve many teachers in the action plans for improvement. Lead teachers communicate well with their groups and the constant discussion that the principal has with teachers feeds into the process of setting goals. As a result, most of the school community knows the goals, although parents on the school leadership team mainly understand the overall goal of the school and not the detail. The principal has a strong presence around the school and conveys her high expectations through daily contact and through initiatives such as characterization of the week, for example, "high standards" which students write about.

Teachers have become more skilled at setting goals for each student and some teachers are confident to let students know how they might achieve their goals. Students generally know their reading level or test grade, but few understand how to reach the next stage in their learning. The inquiry team has made a good start on identifying and working with the lowest performing students and they plan to extend this to working with a few of the English language learners, applying the techniques they have developed. Data shows that boys are underachieving in relation to girls and some strategies have been established, such as male role models and resources that appeal to boys. Another group that has underperformed is grade 6, where large numbers of

students enter the school with low levels of achievement. This group has been carefully monitored this year. The school is developing strategies to deal with this in anticipation of a similar picture next year. More parents are attending meetings since the principal introduced more opportunities for them to meet teachers. Parents who attend, appreciate the monthly progress reports, introduced this year, that lets them and their child know how well their child is doing but does not always tell them what their child needs to do to improve. This has been a very effective method of increasing parent involvement.

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 enhanced by the Core Knowledge Program, a thematic approach to learning for each grade. Students' writing, displayed proudly on the corridor walls, indicates that this approach is helping to develop their literacy skills. In response to data from students about the curriculum, more arts have been introduced this year especially through after school activities. More is planned next year as currently, not all students have access to an arts program. The environment in all classrooms is inviting with attractive display of students' work. Students say they feel safe in school and have someone they can confide in. Their parents agree. Students gain high self-esteem because they are treated with respect by adults in the school.

Teachers are accountable for the progress made by their students through the interim assessments from which they group students. They are developing good skills in differentiating instruction. A number of teachers are setting tasks on three levels for students who are underperforming, on goal or who need pushing to the next stage. In one class, a low-performing group, working mainly at Level 2 in science, was challenged to reach Level 3 work. However, there is a degree of inconsistency as for some, this is a new approach this year. Some work has gone into ensuring that the highest performing students meet their potential such as taking high school examinations. Learning centers are available for those who want to do more but students say that they often finish work early and when they do, some will read or help others rather than deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding. Many students enjoy their work and are eager learners. Sometimes, teaching does not allow students to develop responsibility for their learning or to extend their ideas as the teacher does all the work and sometimes answers for the student. When the pace drops, a number of boys lose interest quickly and although they behave well, are not always focused on their learning.

Resources are allocated very well, using data to identify what is needed. Examples include smaller classes to tackle underachievement, resources for differentiation, and materials that appeal to boys in order to motivate them. In the past, attendance was an issue for the school, but it has risen this year because of the attendance plan in which teachers and other staff regularly monitor absences and take immediate action.

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 principal and cabinet frequently observe classes using current priorities from the action plans as a focus for the observation. One example is student engagement, which was picked up as an issue in the last review. The information from this is used to shape professional development for the whole staff and on an individual basis. The principal meets teachers regularly and is always available for discussion. As one teacher commented, "The principal is always giving us teachable moments". Teachers have good opportunities to visit one another's classrooms and common planning, grade team and cross team meetings support professional development well.

All staff are involved in providing guidance to students and this supports the positive culture of the school. Teachers mentor students and parents are trained as learning leaders. All staff are involved in counseling for students' personal development. Students are very clear about how to behave as the school effectively promotes respect in relationships. The school has established excellent partnerships with outside agencies. It is open each day until 10 pm for students and adults. There are extensive links with hospitals and health centers and students are given opportunities to learn from male and female role models. The links very effectively extend opportunities for students and their parents and support very good personal development.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

There has been good progress in this area since the last review and procedures for setting goals and reviewing them have been established. The action plans from the Comprehensive Education Plan have appropriately been the focus for development and the long-term goals are measurable. Systems to review progress towards the goals are developing well, as the principal and cabinet monitor the goals from the quarterly interim assessments. The principal recognizes that this is a developing process and that goals need to be revised more quickly in response to the data as annual goals are not always revised. Interim goals are not clearly defined and although quarterly reviews check to see if the school is on track, the goals are not always revised.

Monthly assessments of students are used effectively and result in changes in the grouping of students, as do interventions by the Academic Intervention Services. The systems are robust but are not yet embedded in the practice of all teachers, as they are new. The principal, cabinet and all staff share the vision of a school that offers a safe haven in which students achieve well. The data from the school indicates that the systems that are now in place have started to raise achievement and the school is very well placed to continue this trend.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: PS/IS 323	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