



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Philippa Schuyler School For the Gifted and
Talented**

**Middle School 383
1300 Greene Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11237**

Principal: Barbara Sanders

Dates of review: May 12 –14, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Andy McClean

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Philippa Schuyler School for the Gifted and Talented is a middle school with 1214 students from 5 through grade 8. The school population comprises 71% Black, 24% Hispanic, 0.5% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 6% 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 95.8%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's communicative leadership style, very well supported by cabinet and faculty, produces a clear focus on strategic goals.
- Well-established data systems identify patterns and trends of underachievement.
- Extensive support for special education students and English language learners ensures their full inclusion in school life.
- Students demonstrate exemplary behavior and motivation because of a stimulating curriculum, with many opportunities to excel in the arts.
- Teachers and students use technology very effectively to enhance investigations and presentation of work.
- A culture of trust and mutual support is evident in all facets of school activity.
- Students understand their immediate and long-term goals with focused support from teachers to assist in their achievement.
- The administration's consistent observations of teachers' impact on student learning leads to effective professional development practice.
- A true family and community spirit within school encourages parental support, interest and inquiry into student progress.
- Detailed school self-evaluation results in modification of instruction to address underachievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Assist teachers in the employment of technology to increase academic challenge for all students.
- Disseminate good instructional practices, currently seen in school, to improve teachers' confidence in planning lessons to meet the needs of all students.
- Standardize the use and collection of data for student assessment portfolios throughout the school.

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.

As a result of the principal's "open-door" policy, and good systems of communication, a clear understanding of strategic goals exists. A supportive cabinet and faculty do their utmost to realize student potential. Though small in number, special education students and English language learners receive very effective support. A wide and stimulating curriculum engages student enthusiasm. This also results in high attendance. Focused professional development has increased teachers' understanding of the wealth of data collected for each student. As a result, teachers use data far more effectively than at the time of the last review to analyze patterns of progress. All students now have a good understanding of their short-term goals for mathematics and English language arts. Discussions, held frequently with their teachers, enable students to work towards common goals. Teachers now make greater use of technology to provide differentiation and challenge for all levels of achievement but this is not always consistent. Diagnostic technology provides teachers with a clear understanding of specific areas of need in mathematics, particularly students' difficulty with word problems. Student assessment portfolios enable teachers and parents to measure progress towards specific targets over time. At present, collection of such portfolios is not uniform throughout the school.

A very collegial and reflective faculty uses self-evaluation effectively to understand their current strengths and weaknesses. Strategic goals provide a sharp focus to improve standards, with defined numerical increases specified for mathematics and English language arts. The principal and administration use regular formal and informal classroom visits to judge the impact of professional development on instruction. Teachers show great awareness of the need to adapt teaching styles to students' learning styles, as in a grade 8 social studies class, with lively debate on the morality of atomic bomb use in World War II. The teacher color codes all board writing, provides many different source materials and encourages debate in small groups to invoke very successful engagement. The inquiry team supports a group of students from grade 5 through 8, chosen from data scrutiny as those at greatest risk of failure. Lessons learned from the team lead to an appropriate whole-school focus to improve student self-assessment. Many avenues exist to improve the contact between home and school.

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 uses data very effectively to deduce the need to address a decline in student performance and take steps to address it. Administrators use a wealth of evidence to track significant reductions in English language arts scores between grades 5 and 6. This results in whole school discussion to understand the need to address specific aspects of literacy. Specific groups targeted from data scrutiny receive extra support in math. Diagnostic technology helps define specific areas of need, as with the school objective to ensure students have a greater comprehension of word problems. Numbers of special education students and English language learners are small. However, support and effective intervention result from data which leads to investigation of initial problems. The school employs assessment portfolios to measure students' progress in all grades for English language arts and mathematics. As yet, collection of data for these portfolios is not uniform in all classes. Students themselves talk confidently about their areas of need, how they intend to take the next steps and the results of their teachers' assistance. The principal's use of data, ably supported by a data-knowledgeable cabinet and technology specialist, has resulted in the selection of a group of students who make least progress. The principal's book club enables a significant improvement in this group's self-esteem and reading levels.

Regular grade, department and faculty meetings assess progress through data. Students take entry tests and then elect to follow dance, drama, music or art courses. From these early tests, teachers understand a student's starting point in school and at each grade level. Interim tests, both standardized and those designed by the school, produce a regular stream of data to measure progress of classes, grades and individuals. The principal ensures that training to use this wealth of data is current and relevant, with regular comparisons with similar schools to identify new challenges.

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.

Very effective collaboration amongst the faculty results in clear strategic goals for improvement. A well established process begins before the start of the school year to analyze what has worked and what has not, to improve standards. A robust action plan prioritizes future initiatives with clear timetables for review and interim measurements. The school focuses on improvement in mathematics and English language arts instruction as the bedrock of all learning. From analysis of specific results, the inquiry team focuses on a group of students considered to be at risk of failure. Their conclusions, disseminated to all staff, result in whole school initiatives to improve students' ability to examine cause and effect in literature. In mathematics, a school wide initiative to improve students' results in word problems improves their ability to decode written text. Data showed that teaching styles do not match students' learning styles. From cabinet discussion and teachers' meetings, the faculty now utilizes a wide range of teaching techniques to match their students' needs. Students' presence in school results from their selection as gifted and talented. The principal and teachers therefore demand high standards of academic and social progress. Parents testify to very good systems of communication that inform them on a regular basis of their children's successes or failures. Newsletters to parents provide regular information on whole school initiatives. Teachers and other support staff dedicate a great deal of their own time to ensure both students and parents understand what is required of them. Use of a specific website provided parents and students with home exercises to improve achievement. Parents accept their responsibilities readily and work in partnership to ensure their children's success. Students respond with maturity to

the challenges given them. Regular discussion with teachers provides them with a deep understanding of the privileges of their education and of their strengths and weaknesses in learning. They respond with enthusiasm and maturity.

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 provides exemplary opportunities for students to demonstrate and improve their gifts and talents in dance, drama and art. Students study a core curriculum with a strong emphasis on literacy and mathematics skills that underpin their learning well. The school’s current emphasis is on students’ comprehension of subject-specific vocabulary and teachers reflect this well in lessons. Word walls act as effective reminders to students in many classes. Math instruction provides a common focus on the interpretation of word problems. Colleagues in other departments understand these core foci and seek to use common instructional approaches. Teachers use technology, visual imagery and manipulatives to enhance learning. Students in a grade 7 French class showed considerable enthusiasm by their immersion in the language because their teacher provided an exemplary role model to demonstrate correct vocabulary and inflection. The class typifies the pace and direction of the majority of instruction present in school. Engaging projects, linked with well planned, enthusiastic instruction, encourages high attendance and active participation. First steps have been made to improve teachers’ use of technology to provide depth and variety of challenge in planning and instruction. As yet, this has still to impact on an increase in academic challenge, particularly for high achieving students. Effective procedures address any decline in attendance or absence from classes. Extension of technology facilities results from objective reflection on the school’s current needs and what will make the greatest impact on raising student achievement.

Students participate in a wide variety of arts activities. Dance classes provide equal opportunities for boys and girls to display and improve their talents. Students’ greater use of technology results in impressive work in English language arts classes. Robotics classes enable students to experiment with a model “scorpion”, which responds to different stimuli. A grade 8 English language arts class used background music imaginatively to create mood, with students able to use art and technology to produce poetry of a high standard. Teachers provide many opportunities to support their students’ academic and personal development that leads to their greater understanding of challenges they face in school. Administration supports the faculty with effective lines of communication to address their concerns about resources and safety of students. Mutual trust and respect between adults in school results in students modeling their own conduct in like manner.

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 has established effective systems to monitor the impact of teacher instruction. Administration carries out regular formal observations as well as daily walkthroughs to measure the quality of learning. Such is the open and professional attitude of the faculty to constructive criticism that teachers participate readily in a

profound dialogue to improve standards. While professional development concentrates on the development of the sharing of best practice, there isn't a dialogue to evaluate each other's successful instruction. The faculty celebrates its quality of instruction. However, structured intervisitations to ensure greater continuity of best instruction is not systematic. Common planning meetings in grades and departments demonstrate staff willingness to learn from each other. Teachers new to the profession and the school receive very positive mentoring and support through professional development. Acceptance of the thoughts and opinions of new teachers demonstrates the faculty's collaborative desire to learn from each other. A collegial approach to leadership enables teachers to make their contributions to form school goals. With this responsibility comes accountability for student achievement. Guidance services provide very good support that has a positive impact on students' attitudes, behavior and most importantly, their learning. The school enforces a code of conduct and dress code with rigor aligned with reality. Students respond very sensibly to their responsibilities. They use channels of communication with their teachers very effectively to ensure consideration of their opinions. The school provides many avenues for students to establish links with the next stage of their education with college visits and visiting speakers.

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 principal communicates a clear direction for the school. Systems of communication with faculty, students and parents ensure that school goals drive all activities. The principal takes every opportunity to sound out the opinions of colleagues through the senior leadership team and cabinet. Parents' association activities, both social and in support of students' academic progress, contribute to the communal good through feedback given to teachers on what succeeds or not to improve learning. The school is effective in creating plans for improving student performance that contain goals which are measureable and time sensitive. Plans related to improving teacher outcomes also include measureable and time sensitive benchmarks. Her open style of leadership enhances regular evaluation of progress towards goals through effective partnerships with cabinet and staff. If a lack of progress occurs, as with grade 5 to 6 English language arts scores last year, a well-established process of examination begins. These results produced an immediate reaction with new strategies to ensure students' full comprehension of vocabulary used in all classes. A number of teachers make very good use of student assessment portfolios and diagnostic results from technology programs to adjust and modify their instruction. The principal understands the vital need to this practice's presence in all classes.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Philippa Schuyler 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