



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Anna Silver School**

**Elementary School 020**

**166 Essex Street  
Manhattan  
NY 10002**

**Principal: Felix Gil**

**Dates of review: November 7 - 8, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Nick Butt**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Anna Silver School is an elementary school with 609 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 8% Black, 65% Hispanic, 2% White, and 25% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 93% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principals' highly focused vision for the school's development has brought about significant successful change.
- The school gathers a wide range of assessment data and analyzes it incisively, presenting it in easily accessible ways.
- Staff collaborate together especially well to make plans and set goals, which have a most beneficial impact on students in greatest need of improvement.
- Students are fully involved in their own learning, and parents receive regular and detailed information about their children's progress.
- Teachers make learning exciting and fun for students, which motivates them to give of their best.
- A family atmosphere and extremely positive relationships enable students to thrive in their personal and academic growth.
- Professional development is tailored precisely to teachers' individual needs, as well as meeting the requirements of whole school goals.
- The school runs very smoothly because of the clear systems and procedures that promote it as a harmonious community of learners.
- The school enjoys a rich variety of partnerships with outside organizations that contribute greatly to students' development.
- Teachers and administrators use assessment information diligently to evaluate progress towards goals and revise next steps for student improvement.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure all teachers are fully confident in using new technology to interpret data.
- Consolidate curriculum changes to enhance their impact on student outcomes.
- Continue to build links with parents as active partners in their children's learning.

## 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.**

Anna Silver School is going through a renaissance under its new administration. The school has made considerable progress since the last review because of the determination and drive of its leaders. Parents, staff and students all welcome the changes that have brought a sharper focus on achievement, with data used at greater depth to set goals and measure growth. Renewed academic rigor is combined with a great variety of enrichment activities, many supplied through partnerships with outside organizations.

Instruction is of a high quality, because teachers have time to reflect on their practice and are willing to learn from one another's strengths. One teacher commented, "There's always some place to turn. Teachers will go out of their way to help you." Students say they find learning interesting and fun, because "teachers break it down to help us understand." Parents feel very well informed about their children's progress and like the way they are involved straight away if there is any concern. Teachers are making much more use of data to assess how well their students are doing, and to modify plans and instruction in the light of what it reveals. This includes studying how different ethnic groups are performing, an area for development from the last review. New technology is opening up new possibilities for further refining their analyses. The school accepts that more training is required to ensure all teachers are fully confident in using this.

As a result of changes to the curriculum and instruction, students are making greater gains in their learning. A real emphasis on those in most need of improvement, such as special education students, has led to particular progress. The inquiry team has taken as its focus a sub-group of special education English language learners, and has made good progress in setting out the basis for its research. The curriculum has undergone a transformation, and is much more relevant to students' needs, with teachers not only planning across grades, but between grades as well. Some of the changes are recent and need time to become established, such as in the transition in English language arts from grade 3 to grade 4. Students are much more involved in their own learning since the last review, assessing their own and others' work, and giving feedback to teachers about how they learn best. The excellent relationships between students and staff give the school a relaxed but purposeful demeanor, described by one parent as, "like family."

The school has tackled all the areas to develop from the last review well. There are more meetings for parents, and many opportunities to find out what their children are learning. The school is conscious that there are still parents it needs to reach, who are not so active in supporting their children's learning. Great strides have been made in the past year, and the school is very well placed to continue to grow in its academic success and as a nurturing learning environment where students feel valued and special.

## **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 gathers a very wide range of information through regular and systematic interim assessments, and presents the data electronically in accessible forms. This helps teachers to analyze at individual student and classroom level where strengths lie, and what deficiencies need to be remedied. Groups of teachers meet at grade level to make links and look for trends across their classrooms. The school's central database records the progress of every student and monitors the interventions they are receiving. This is a valuable resource available to leaders and teachers, and enables comparisons to be made across grades, at whole school level, and longitudinally over time. Teachers therefore form a very clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve their students' outcomes. The performance of special education students and English language learners is reviewed frequently so that modifications can be made to their individual programs to hasten improvement. This has led to considerable gains in their progress in the past year. The school now analyzes in depth how well girls and boys are doing relative to one another and the progress of ethnic groups. It also compares how well these sub-groups are performing in comparison with similar schools across the city. The inquiry team has brought together a group of special education students who are also English language learners to study closely, because they have been identified as underperforming in relation to their peers. The use of new systems such as ARIS is assisting the school in delving even deeper into its data, but it recognizes that some staff need training to be fully conversant with using this new information effectively.

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

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

Teachers collaborate at weekly grade meetings and informally to discuss data and to set goals. These meetings are productive because they are centered on students' learning. Grade 4 teachers, for example, worked with one of the literacy coaches to review a writing piece, considering students' different approaches to the task, and took ideas from the session to apply in their own classrooms. The principal sees the school as "a culture that encourages learners to take risks and extend themselves beyond what they already know." These high expectations are made known to all students and their parents, and are reflected in ambitious individual targets. Benchmarks are set to measure the rate of progress students make during the year to check they are on course to meet their goals. Individual education plans are sharper than they were, with specific milestones for special education students to reach, and the timescales by which they should achieve them. Students at risk of not making grade level are highlighted by teachers and interventions agreed that are tailored to their exact needs. The effectiveness of the support offered is evaluated at regular intervals, and new tiers of assistance put in place where necessary. The school's consistency and strength in this approach has resulted in these students making particular gains. Whole school goals are shared widely with staff and arrived at through consultation. They inform planning and become the focus of grade-level meetings. Students are much more involved in assessing their own learning since the last

review, with peer-editing of writing and selection of pieces for portfolios. One student said, "We can go to a friend for help." Parents value the amount of detailed information they receive about their children's progress, and appreciate the meetings, workshops and classes they can attend to find out more about their children's education. There are still parents, however, who are less forthcoming in joining with the school as partners in their children's learning. The school recognizes the challenge it faces in involving these parents more.

**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.**

Much work has gone into devising a relevant curriculum, aligned to state standards, that meets the needs of every student. Teachers make links across subjects and try to tailor the units of work to students' interests. A project on Mexico, for example, investigated that nation's art and culture, and involved parents in sharing Mexican food and music. The curriculum is being compiled on a central database to enable teachers to understand what students have learnt in the previous grade and will go on to study later. There have been major changes to the core curricula of English learning arts and math, and these are still being established as teachers become more familiar with them. Early indications are that students find the new approaches more interesting and their achievement is rising. One advantage of the new curriculum is that it has differentiation built into it, so that students work at levels appropriate for them, and find the work suitably challenging.

The curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of arts, music and sport, and projects such as the architecture program where students design improvements to the school environment. The school has its own gallery to showcase students' work, including striking metallic sculptures by the youngest students. The school's basketball team is particularly successful, spurred on by its official cheerleaders. One student said, "I like gym - we can exercise and build more muscles!" Students take part in chess tournaments and all third graders receive fifty dollars to spend on reading books. Singing and dance are taught by professionals from a theatre school. These activities contribute greatly to students' personal development and their enjoyment of school.

The principal assigns staff well to make the most of their strengths, and places students where they are likely to succeed. Cluster staff are trained to deliver specific support programs and push in to classes to meet student needs. A student remarked, "We're all really close in the school", a view supported by parents, who said there is a willingness among staff "to go beyond the call of duty." This fosters exceptionally good relationships between students and staff, and means students are motivated to work hard and behave well. Students act as "conflict managers" to help resolve problems and have a voice through the student council. Attendance is above the city-wide average because students enjoy school and there are robust procedures such as first-day calling to reduce absence.

**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 administrators conduct regular class walkthroughs, as well as undertaking more formal observations of instruction. They receive updates from the coaches about the types of professional development teachers have received and measure its impact. Teachers praise the way that new initiatives have been implemented in a structured way so that they have been manageable and effective. Teachers have the opportunity to develop personal improvement plans as part of their career progression, and are invited to suggest areas where training would be helpful. They frequently observe one another teach and engage in fruitful discussions about best practice. Time is built into their schedules to reflect together, and to turnkey ideas gained from courses they have attended.

The school's support services are integrated very well, so that all staff know what assistance students are receiving and what impact this is having on their progress. The school psychologist runs workshops for teachers in dealing with particular issues that might arise in their classrooms, and the award-winning guidance counselor provides a listening ear for students and parents alike. She says, "Any child who walks into this building belongs to everyone." As a result of everybody being on the same page, the school runs tremendously smoothly, aided by clear systems and procedures, such as those set out in the staff handbook. There are excellent partnerships with a host of outside organizations that enhance students' academic and personal experiences of school. These include the Metropolitan and Whitney museums, Carnegie Hall (music instruction), the Henry Street Settlement (after-school program and arts courses), Estee Lauder (science projects), Rosie's Broadway Kids (song and dance) and Music and the Brain (keyboard instruction for all kindergarten and first-graders).

**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 Comprehensive Education Plan is written well and incorporates the work of a range of staff members and others from the school community. It is a living document that sets out clear timescales and benchmarks by which goals will be measured, and its whole school aims are discussed frequently by the different groups that contribute to the school's work. There is a high degree of accountability for its successful completion, so that everyone knows what is required of them and how they work together to drive the school forward. Teachers are skilled at using most data to measure how well their students are doing, and to group them according to their needs, making adjustments at regular intervals as new evidence comes forward. A particular focus at the moment is to improve comprehension skills throughout the school, using students' writing as a vehicle for sharpening their understanding of text. Reflective discussions ensure plans and instruction are modified promptly in order to reach goals. School leaders know exactly what is going on and keep a strong strategic view of the school's direction, gently steering it through occasionally choppy waters towards a better destination. They are flexible in their approach, and open to new ideas. The principal said, "If you can show me that it works, I will support it," a view confirmed by teachers, who appreciate being allowed to do what they do best – accelerate students' learning through effective teaching. The school has come on in leaps and

bounds under the leadership of its principal and assistant principal, who have effected substantial change successfully. This means that the school is on an upward course of continuous improvement through rigorous academic endeavor.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Anna Silver School</b>	△	▶	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?				X	
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?					X
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				X	

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

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

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>▶</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					<b>X</b>