



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Island School

Elementary - Middle School 188

**442 East Houston Street
New York
NY 10002**

Principal: Barbara Slatin

Dates of review: March 27 - 28, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Paul Cosway

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Island School is an elementary-middle school with 404 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 30% Black, 66% Hispanic, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 90.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 90% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a very effective leader, highly regarded by the school community, who shares her goals very effectively and has the highest expectations for her students and staff.
- The school is a very effective environment for learning, with attractive classrooms, good discipline and students who are well motivated to learn.
- Staff know and care for their students very well indeed, constantly seeking ways to help them to improve their work.
- Teachers work in teams, collaborating very well indeed to share and improve their instructional practice, all working to raise achievement.
- Intervention and support, including extra staff, for students who need additional help with their learning is very effective.
- Achievement is rising because of the monitoring and evaluation of instruction, based on the analysis of data.
- Professional development is used very well to improve instruction and to meet assessed needs of all students.
- The curriculum and enrichment activities provide excellent opportunities to motivate and engage the students, with an outstanding creative arts program.
- Parents feel warmly welcomed by the school and appreciate the close and regular contact they have with the staff.
- Excellent use is made of outside organizations and agencies to provide academic and personal support for students and to enrich the curriculum.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that activities take account of the achievement of different groups within the classroom.
- Extend the successful use of data in English language arts and math to social studies and science.
- Formally analyze the progress of ethnic groups on a regular basis to ensure that no group underachieves.

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.

This is a very caring school, where the welfare and the academic progress of all students are considered paramount. Parents and students praise the staff for the support they receive, emphasizing the very many ways that the school has benefited them. The school is a very effective environment for learning, with colorful, welcoming classrooms and well-behaved and well-motivated learners. The principal sets the tone for the school. Her concern for the progress and wellbeing of all has created an institution where students and adults alike see themselves as learners and constantly seek improvement. Her expectations are high and are shared with all staff. Already more than 70% of students are making at least year's academic growth each year and she intends this to be 100% in the current year. Achievement is rising because of the detailed monitoring and evaluation of instruction, based on the analysis of an extensive range of data in English language arts and math. The lowest-achieving students make good progress because their needs are met very well. The school's use of data is less well developed in monitoring the performance and progress of different ethnic groups.

Teachers work as a team, collaborating well to share and improve their instructional practice besides benefiting from a good range of professional development opportunities. These often relate directly to the perceived needs that arise from test and assessment data. Both teachers and students have targets for English language arts and math, which are set and revised regularly. They are fully aware of the predicted levels for their students, whether or not they are meeting these levels and are fully accountable for the progress that their students are making. The school is ready to extend this good practice to the wider curriculum. The inquiry team is now well established and is developing excellent practice that is being extended to raise achievement across the school.

The curriculum and enrichment activities provide excellent opportunities to motivate and engage the students. There is an outstanding creative arts program for all, including opportunities to learn to play instruments, use technology, film-making, art and dance. Excellent links with other institutions, including colleges, enhance opportunities for students. Parents feel warmly welcomed by the school and appreciate the close and regular contact they have with the staff. They are always able to talk to teachers and are contacted immediately by letter or telephone if issues arise.

The school has made good progress in addressing the areas for development from the previous Quality Review. There are now long-term quantifiable school goals and a greatly increased focus on academic achievement. Students are clear about their own goals and their progress towards them. Staff use data well to measure their students' progress, but the setting of differentiated tasks to meet students' needs is not well established.

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 cabinet has a very good overview of the progress being made by grades, classes and individual students throughout the school in English language arts and the detail on math progress is almost as good. This has not been extended yet to other subjects, but there are plans to do so. The administration records progress over time and assess the relative progress of some sub-groups, including very clear analysis of the progress made by English language learners and special education students. Separate tracking is done formally of boys and girls and of the different ethnic groups on a yearly basis, but they are tracked informally more frequently. All teachers have assessment data and the administrative team knows the students well enough to be aware of general trends. Taken together, these systems provide a clear picture of each student's strengths and areas for improvement and groups of students who will receive special attention are highlighted. The school carefully monitors performance over time in English language arts and math for all students. These well-established processes have a positive impact on the progress of all students. The school recognizes that there is more work to do in science and social studies to be able to track student performance and progress at the same high level.

Teachers are now confident in data analysis and have received comprehensive training and support. The principal monitors results in the school in comparison with those in similar schools in order to measure the school's effectiveness. All comparisons are currently favorable, reflecting the effectiveness of the school's work.

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.

Members of the administrative team set overarching goals for students' learning and share their high expectations with all staff. Teachers collaborate with administrators to set goals for classes and individual students, taking account of past performance and the school's expectation that all students will make one year's academic progress. These targets are regularly reviewed and time frames set. Strategies are adapted to meet the learning styles of different types of learners whose progress has been identified for particular focus. For example, boys are given increased access to technology in English language arts classes to encourage them to write.

There are very good examples of the way that the school identifies and improves the performance of students who are in danger of falling behind. They use a range of expertise to find appropriate strategies. One boy who was considerably behind with his writing was enabled to work at a desk of his own away from distractions. He has made almost a year's progress in three months now that he is focused. Whole school goals

are shared with all members of the school community and teachers and parents are fully involved in achieving them. They are given good information to help them to monitor progress and help students to reach their targets. The school's high expectations of the progress that each student should make are conveyed to parents regularly via report cards and notes. This is a two-way process and parents know that they can contact teachers or the parent co-coordinator to let the school know about their children's learning needs. The school also reaches out to families to help them to help their children by, for example, offering English courses to parents.

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 has selected an English program that is closely linked to success criteria in order to produce helpful data to measure progress and record which aspects of the subject that cause students difficulties. This strategy is also being increasingly applied to math. The program is in the process of revision to make it easier to analyze trends in students' progress. It is because the teachers themselves want more measurable data that this review is being carried out. Teachers feel fully accountable for their students' progress and there are regular reviews where class levels are discussed. Teachers plan interesting lessons and levels of student engagement are monitored by the administrative team and by feedback from the students themselves. There are many examples of the ways that teachers successfully adapt teaching strategies and levels of support in order to meet the varied learning needs of their students. There are high numbers of adults in many rooms to ensure that students get good one to one support when needed. While the instruction given for some of the work is adjusted according to students' capabilities, it is rare to find that tasks are differentiated to provide just the right level of challenge..

The school offers a broad curriculum with an outstanding coverage of the arts, including instruction in violin, chorus or drumming twice a week for grades 3 to 8, technology education including filmmaking and web design for older students, and a wide range of arts programs. These cover circus skills, fashion design, drama, playwriting and art courses, amongst many others. The school's use of its budget to meet learning needs is very good and has resulted in smaller class sizes and extensions to the learning day in order to successfully meet needs detected by data analysis. Staff and students work in an atmosphere of mutual trust and the school has an excellent program to encourage good attendance, including parent lunches for families who keep up regular attendance.

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.

There are frequent formal and informal observations of teaching by the administrative team and coaches to monitor and further improve teaching. Data is analyzed rigorously to help teachers and students to meet their targets. When data revealed that problem

solving was a weak area in math for many students, a session was set aside each week to develop their problem-solving skills. Performance in math tests rose significantly last year as a result. Teachers report that they have many opportunities to observe each other at work and they meet in study groups weekly to review work, assess student progress and revise plans accordingly. New teachers praise their mentors and the good general help that they receive within this collaborative and mutually supportive school.

Guidance and student support services are very effective in identifying and resolving students' problems. They are extended to families when necessary and parents praise these aspects of the school's work highly. Discipline is good. The school is an effective and smooth running learning environment, as evidenced by the significant improvements students make in their academic performance year on year. Very effective partnerships with outside agencies help the school in its work, including partnerships with colleges to motivate students to aspire to college for the next stage of their education and very strong community links.

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 plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals so that success can be measured and adjustments made when necessary to make instruction more effective. Interim goals are reviewed every three months based on test data and weekly in the study groups based on teacher assessments of progress. This very effective process means that every teacher's outcomes are subject to constant review. Periodic assessments every three months, using Acuity and Scantron data, ensure that the effectiveness of interventions and strategies is monitored regularly and objectively and plans revised in order to meet targets. For example, when data revealed that the younger students' sight vocabulary was weak, additional resources were acquired to tackle the problem, including differentiated phonics instruction. Where individual or small groups of students are identified as falling behind, specialists in areas such as speech therapy join special education teachers, classroom teachers and guidance counselors to put together comprehensive support plans.

The administrative team uses a wide range of data well to track progress towards the school's goals and make immediate revisions where necessary, including strategic decisions affecting content and methodology. Outside experts, such as Teachers College staff, are widely used where they can be useful in helping teachers to raise student achievement. Plans are constantly revised. One reason for this school's effectiveness is that it is never satisfied. It believes in academic rigor and college aspirations for every student. One success leads to the school wanting to at least equal it in another area of its work. Staff are self-critical and very willing to share ideas and seek out advice, led by a principal who has the education and welfare of all her students very much at heart. Her whole school community share her vision fully and work together to promote the academic development and personal well-being of every student.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Island 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