



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Countee Cullen School

Elementary School 194

**244 West 144 Street
New York
NY 10030**

Principal: Daryle Young

Dates of review: January 28 - 29, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Ronnie Solow

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

Countee Cullen School is an elementary school with 288 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 77% Black, and 22% Hispanic. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 88.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 77% eligibility.

The school shares the building with a charter school and the school's partners, The Harlem Children's Zone and Harlem Hospital's on-site medical center.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The administration and staff work in collegial teams to improve academic outcomes for the students.
- Data is used effectively to monitor and evaluate the students' academic progress towards goals.
- The building and classrooms, decorated with high quality displays of student work, charts, and rubrics, provide evidence of a broad, engaging curriculum.
- The staff has coalesced into a collaborative community that supports one another in professional growth.
- The school's processes for supporting new teachers are very effective and enable teachers to settle in well and learn from each other.
- Well-defined rules, regulations and procedures enable the school to run smoothly and efficiently.
- External partnerships provide good support for the academic, social and emotional needs of the students.
- The school and its on-site partners provide a wide range of academic, social and health needs for the students and community.
- The school's good systems for monitoring absence and rewarding students who attend well have improved rates of attendance..
- Budget, scheduling and staffing decisions carefully support the needs of individual and groups of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the disaggregation of data to assess the performance of boys and girls, all ethnic groups and other subgroups in the school.
- Further develop teacher skill in data analysis through differentiated activities which match student needs with well-paced steps in learning.
- Build upon present efforts to increase parental involvement in the school life of their children.

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 has full confidence in the administrative team, a testament to the distributive leadership capacity in the school. The staff works together collegially to develop new ideas and refine established practices. The school now uses data effectively to drive its work in the kindergarten through grade 5 classrooms in order to improve learning outcomes. The staff, a dedicated group of both experienced and relatively new teachers, strives to improve learning outcomes for their students by working together. New staff members are well supported by mentors, coaches and consultants. A small group of parents, participants in the parents' association, feel welcomed and supported by the school. They appreciate the way that the school and its internal partners, the Harlem Children's Zone and Harlem Hospital work together. Despite considerable work to remedy the situation, parental participation is not yet at the desired level.

Many new initiatives are becoming routine, including systems to address curriculum, discipline and instructional needs. Staff members collect and chart data, and regularly review the progress of their students. At this time, data is not disaggregated to determine the progress of some groups according to ethnicity or gender and to gauge the cultural sensitivity of the school. Careful analysis of data indicates the students are making sound progress academically. Teachers and students speak eagerly about the curriculum design of the teaching and learning process. However, differentiated instruction and materials are still at an early stage of development. Where employed, they are effective.

Areas for development from the last Quality Review have been addressed. Professional development sessions address increasing data usage across areas of the curriculum. There are many teams reacting to school needs through strategic planning sessions. Behavioral expectations are clearly communicated and good systems enable the school to deal effectively with negative occurrences.

The inquiry team is fully operational. Through an action research project, they are studying 15 grade 3 students who are performing below grade level expectations in reading in order to assess the effectiveness of the school's interventions.

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 proficient.

The school gathers and analyzes data from a variety of standardized and non-standardized sources, including commercial programs that supply good data. In addition, the staff members keep an assessment binder with all the data about their class and individual student progress over time. Portfolios of student work provide evidence of student growth and achievement, especially in English language arts and math. Special education students and English as second language learners are monitored using standardized and informal assessments to check on their progress. The school gathers information about English language learners through the home language survey and State examinations to assess language proficiency. Special education students, identified and assessed according to mandates, receive suitably targeted education and support services.

The administration analyzes the performance data of groups, recognizing and addressing trends across classes, grades and the school. At this time, data for ethnicity, gender and other sub-groups is not monitored to assess their progress or to address issues of cultural sensitivity. An understanding of the school's past performance and comparisons with schools in their peer horizon indicate that the school is outperforming the other schools in its network. The inquiry team is training the staff to utilize data from the new predictive tests, as well as studying a group of students performing below expectation levels in English language arts. Information is gathered and analyzed to indicate how staff can improve academic planning, instruction and learning outcomes for all students in the school.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal's goals and objectives set the benchmark targets for the year. These plans align with classroom instructional practices to achieve the stated goals for students, classes and grades. Teachers meet in grade teams with coaches to analyze data, plan instructional activities and work towards the goals established in the City, State and local curriculum plans. Students not performing at expected levels receive individualized targeted interventions. In addition to the mandated academic support services, delivered in effective needs-based groups, students receive individual or small group instruction during the school day. Students not responding to the initial interventions, are referred to the pupil personnel committee for the development of individual learning plans. A good checklist, maintained for each class, indicates all the services a student receives, along with a personal data set. Mental health services, counseling and medical services are provided through the on-site agencies support academic interventions, and are carefully monitored for

effectiveness. All intervention services are monitored by the administration at regularly scheduled meetings.

While the school has an open-door policy and invites parents to partner regularly, their involvement is not yet at the desired level. Strategies to increase parental involvement include parent's academic walkthroughs, providing "critical friends" feedback, "Muffins for Moms" and "Donuts for Dads" breakfast meetings, as well as workshops and open-school events. Teachers send home academic and behavioral progress reports weekly. An additional academic information report between the second and third report card periods also keeps parents informed. Newsletters and monthly calendars announce important school news and events. Despite these efforts, the school does not achieve the full involvement of all 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 proficient.

The school's curriculum is sufficiently broad and follows required guidelines. A dance teacher, physical education staff, Doing Art Together consultants, and student Tai Chi trainers provide good support for the academic program.

The principal encourages the staff to increase differentiation of instructional activities and materials to meet individual student needs and learning styles. The school's professional development program has not yet had sufficient impact, and differentiation is still at an early stage of development. The Saturday and winter break test preparation sessions have been successful in assisting Level 2 and Level 3 students to make the jump to the next level of achievement and in preventing slippage. Students show interest and engagement in classroom work. Samples of their best work decorate the halls and classrooms, serving as exhibits of the impact of the broad, motivating curriculum.

Budget, staffing and hiring decisions serve student needs very effectively. Additional teaching staff have enabled reductions in class size. This has proved effective especially for students requiring intensive assistance to meet grade level expectations. Materials for the new science program and leveled libraries are plentiful. Test preparation materials in all subject areas are carefully stratified to develop student skills.

Mutual trust and respect between all members of the school community are conveyed through publicizing the clear expectations of the school. Students are trained as peer mediators and Retired Service Volunteers counsel students to improve their attitude and behavior. Good systems are in place to record and track attendance and lateness. The attendance rate has shown improvement because incentives, trips and certificates reward improved and excellent 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 proficient.

The administration conducts formal and informal observations to assess progress on a regular basis, providing the teachers with timely feedback. During walkthroughs, they monitor the success of strategies to improve curriculum, teaching and learning. During common planning sessions, grade teams meet with the academic coaches to address needs, plan lessons and monitor progress. Intervisitations and demonstration lessons are supportive but not planned on a regular schedule. Efforts at building capacity are beginning to take hold. The administrators attended the Harvard University summer institute and are using the skills they developed to assist the staff with improving classroom teaching and learning techniques.

New staff receive high quality support through mentor teachers and the coaches. Twice weekly, they remain after school to address topics specific to their individual needs. The focus of professional development is on literacy and math as these are the areas of greatest concern for the school. Consultants and coaches are working with the staff to address the needs in these areas, especially in differentiating instruction. Staff are not yet fully aware of the needs of different subgroups as a basis for delivering instruction. The school recognizes that not all teachers have mastered the skills needed to modify instruction based on the information provided by the data.

The school has extensive, highly effective partnerships with local agencies that provide services in support of academic, social, emotional, behavioral and medical needs of the students. The elected student council, peer mediation and Tai Chi programs provide very good opportunities for students to develop leadership skills. The school culture, supported through well-established policies and procedures, such as the student-led pledge of allegiance, further supports mutual respect for all.

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.

The Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal's aims and objectives contain measurable goals with a regular timetable for checking progress. There are systems in place for monitoring the success and evaluating the progress towards meeting the goals outlined in the focused plans. The administration checks formal and informal data sources, information from the pupil personnel committee and attendance on a quarterly schedule, to note the need for re-evaluation and change. Data is examined for each class through the lens of teaching strengths. Students are paired with teachers according to academic and social needs, and compatibility. At mid-year, some classes are reformulated based on the needs indicated by student data outcomes. The principal, in cooperation with the assistant principals, coaches, school leadership team and, most recently, the inquiry team, collaborate on the goal-setting and revision processes.

Data provides the information on progress towards the attainment of goals and objectives. Information from the periodic assessments and the classroom data enables the teachers, coaches and principal to gauge the effectiveness of current academic approaches. This scrutiny allows for revisions when evidence demonstrates the need for correction. The vision of the whole school community recognizes that their school is “a work in progress” and that they “want students to know there is a world beyond 144th Street, and that they can make meaningful contributions to our society.”

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME:	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