



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Robert Vernam School
Elementary - Middle School 042**

488 Beach 66 Street

Queens

NY 11692

Principal: Principal: Riva Madden

Dates of review: February 11 - 12, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Vivian McIver

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

Robert Vernam is an elementary-middle school with 779 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 76.1% Black, 17.9% Hispanic, 2.1% White, and 2.6% Asian or other students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 90%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 62% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principals manage the school well, ensuring that it runs smoothly and that there is mutual trust and respect at all levels.
- The senior staff use carefully analyzed data to establish goals for the school as a whole and to guide the overall strategy for improvement.
- The staff and the inquiry team make good use of data to seek ways to improve the achievement of the special education students.
- Teachers use data systematically to check students' interim progress in core subjects and to monitor standards and establish goals.
- The staff collaborate to review goals regularly, and keep the goals of all students, especially those in greatest need, under constant review.
- Parents are kept well informed of the expectations the school has for their children, how they can provide support and the progress the children are making towards achieving their goals.
- The professional development program is closely focused on strategies that support the school's goal to raise achievement.
- The pupil personnel team provide prompt and effective support for students in need.
- A broad range of subjects and additional programs enhance the core curriculum and stimulate students' interest.
- The principal and senior staff monitor the outcome of all assessments and revise structures and strategic goals if the data indicates this is necessary.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide all staff with more direct access to data to give them greater ownership of data retrieval and analysis.
- Further develop the skills of staff in differentiating instruction.
- Continue to focus firmly on raising the achievement of those students in greatest need of improvement, notably those at level 2.
- Improve feedback to teachers from classroom observations.
- Provide more structured opportunities for teachers to learn from each other

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 combines visionary leadership with a practical grasp of what is achievable. She and the staff are firmly committed to using data to improve students' achievement and good progress has been made since the last review. For example, the school now disaggregates, analyzes and uses data on all ethnic groups, actively involves parents in the school's work and evaluates rigorously the progress of students referred to the pupil personnel team.

A wide range of data is made available to staff, the majority of whom use it effectively to set student goals. However, there are not enough computers to give staff first-hand experience of data retrieval and analysis. The school has recognized that it has not made enough progress in raising the achievement of the significant number of special education and low achieving students and has made this a priority. The inquiry team is focusing its efforts on finding ways to best support these students and is trialing new approaches with them. The pupil personnel team is also working hard to provide support for those students in greatest need of improvement. Significant progress has been made in raising the achievement of students from kindergarten through grade 3 using carefully selected teaching materials and data from frequent assessments.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum enriched by productive partnerships with outside organizations. The staff collaborate actively in goal setting both for the school as a whole and for groups and individual students. Their strong commitment to the school contributes to its smooth running and purposeful learning atmosphere. The professional development program is well aligned with the school's improvement goals.

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 data from a wide range of sources and uses it effectively to establish the current achievement of each student, to set goals for students and to plan support if required. At present only senior staff have easy access to data. They analyze the data for the school as a whole and make relevant data available to the rest of the staff. It is

then applied at classroom and grade level and the findings used to inform instruction and map progress towards goals. The teachers regularly use the data provided as their guide to planning improvement in their students' achievements.

The school has used data to pinpoint accurately the number of special education and low-achieving students in the school, especially boys. These students receive a range of support but progress in improving their achievement has generally been slow. The inquiry team has focused its investigations on how to improve the effectiveness of the school's support for these students. The team's use of data is now setting new directions for the support arrangements.

The school's use of data has produced promising results in improving the performance of students in kindergarten through grade 3. Student progress is carefully monitored within specific levels and time frames set by the Reading First program. The data shows that this carefully managed process is significantly raising the achievement of these young students. English language learners are regularly assessed using relevant tests and they are well supported by a wide variety of learning materials. Data is also used systematically to assess and contrast the achievement of the school's ethnic groups.

While the management systems that support the use of data are generally satisfactory, the lack of computers throughout the school means that few teachers have regular direct access to data on their own students. This restricts teachers' opportunities to explore for themselves the implications of the data for improving their own classroom practice.

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.

The collaborative processes in the school have a very positive effect on the school's work. There is an intensive corporate review of goals three times a year. Teachers base decisions regarding goals achieved, realignments required or interventions needed firmly on the data provided. This is a painstaking process and is very effective. The number of students at level 2 is a constant preoccupation at grade meetings, and, as a result, the school is exploring various strategies to find the best way to improve these students' achievement.

Students or groups who are in even greater need of support are treated with equal care. Data continues to play a major role in determining the nature of the remedial support required. The procedures are familiar to all staff and work well. A student whose progress or behavior has become a cause for concern is referred to the pupil personnel team. The team carefully assesses data on the student's academic progress and takes careful consideration of social factors. The student's parents are kept fully informed at all stages and consulted on the outcome of the group's discussions. The concern throughout is on what will work in the best interests of the student.

The sharing of whole school goals and detailed consultation on them continues throughout the year. Priorities are decided at the first faculty meeting each year. There is an active parent group, committed to supporting the school, which organizes events to encourage local interest in and support for school activities. The school makes a great

effort to involve the parents in supporting their children's education. The parent coordinator and school coaches organize workshops for parents to explain the school's aims and how parents can contribute to their success. These sessions are well attended.

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 principal and staff succeed in maintaining an environment of trust, respect and purposeful learning throughout the school. Students appreciate the ways in which their teachers encourage them, frequently discussing their individual grades with them and reflecting progress, for example, in classroom wall displays.

Teachers closely monitor students' progress towards their goals and act promptly if students slip behind. They make good use of benchmarking for English language arts and math, using and cross checking information from various sources. The monthly pacing calendar is particularly well used to monitor achievement in math. A broad range of subjects enhances the core curriculum with additional support provided by "lunch and learn" classes and the Read 180 program. A range of highly productive partnerships with outside organizations further enriches the curriculum. The teachers are well aware of their accountability for raising levels of achievement and work hard to improve the performance of groups and individual students through accurate record-keeping

Budgeting has not included sufficient allocations to provide computers for staff use. As a result the teachers have difficulty in accessing data on their students for themselves, and this restricts their ability to differentiate instruction to meet student needs. This hinders in particular the teachers' efforts to accelerate students from level 2 to level 3 and leaves a minority of lessons lacking a structured approach to planning for student progression. Attendance, which currently stands at 90%, is steadily rising due to the vigilance of the school's family assistant.

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 principal observes some classroom teaching daily and senior staff also monitor teaching regularly. These monitoring arrangements are generally satisfactory but follow-up with the teachers does not focus sufficiently on what students have gained from lessons. Although there are opportunities for teachers to visit one another's classrooms to experience and discuss, for example, differentiated instruction the visits are not sufficiently structured for the teachers to gain maximum benefit.

Professional development is currently focused on exploring and implementing methods designed to raise student achievement from level 1 and 2 to level 3 and above. The school has recognized that improving teachers' skills in data analysis and differentiated

instruction are vital steps and has suitably aligned its program of professional development to help it achieve these goals.

The principal and her assistants set the tone of the school and this is underpinned by the strong collaborative culture among staff. The principal's calm, steady approach encourages both staff and students to try hard and give their best. The school's guidance counselors and the pupil personnel team effectively monitor the achievement of students requiring various kinds of support and this contributes strongly to the smooth running of the school. The school has established very good working partnerships with a number of outside organizations which help students develop a range of interests. For example, many students are enthusiastically involved in the Teaching Entrepreneurship program, and the Robin Hood Foundation program integrates reading and career knowledge for students in grades 6 through 8.

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 has a very clear vision for the school which is shared by the school community. Foremost among the school's ambitions for the students is to raise their level of achievement, and planning is primarily focused on that goal. The data is clearly proving invaluable in setting short-, medium- and long-term goals for grades, groups and individual students. The majority of teachers constantly use the available data to gauge outcomes and to establish and adjust students' goals, although a minority are not sufficiently rigorous in evaluating progress towards interim goals. The principal also makes informed decisions on yearly staff allocation on the basis of performance indicated by the data.

Staff who have ready access to data make good use of Acuity as a diagnostic tool. The results help to establish benchmarks, to inform periodic assessment and to plan the way forward for groups of students and for individuals. Overall plans for the school are reviewed and revised regularly during the year and goals for student groups and individuals are changed immediately if the data indicates that this is required. Thereafter senior staff monitor progress regularly and use the outcome to adjust the overall goals of the school if they need realignment. The staff use the data wisely to ensure that goals are adjusted upwards to reflect the school's principal objective, the drive for higher achievement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCHOOL NAME: Robert Vernam 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 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 | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 5 | | | | X | |

| | |
|---|------------------------------------------------|
| ◇ | Outstanding |
| + | Well Developed |
| ✓ | Proficient |
| ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features |
| Δ | Underdeveloped |