



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Alley Pond School

Elementary School 46

**64 - 45 218 Street
Queens
NY 11364**

Principal: Marsha Goldberg

Dates of review: October 29 – 30, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Peter Williman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Alley Pond is an elementary school with 404 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 7% Black, 14% Hispanic, 20% White, and 59% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 34% 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 96.6%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's clear vision and strong leadership result in a highly inclusive school dedicated to individual student progress and fulfillment.
- The school is a collaborative community, working very effectively to reach the same broad goal of raising student achievement.
- The collection, content and management of data, at school and classroom levels, are exemplary.
- Services for special education students and English language learners are of a very high quality, resulting from meticulous analysis of student progress and need.
- The school places high priority upon the personal development of all its students.
- The administration and instructional developers differentiate professional development effectively to meet the needs of individual teachers and school goals.
- Students are stimulated by the teaching and work hard within lessons.
- The school community values the positive school ethos developed within well-managed classroom and school-wide environments.
- The school provides a broad curriculum with significant enrichment opportunities during and after school.
- Parents value the communication, partnership and open door policy which the school promotes.

What the school needs to improve

- Set specific goals for individuals and groups of students.
- Plan for student progress and professional development through achievable, objectively measurable, interim and final goals.
- Include a clear schedule of benchmarks for monitoring and evaluation in school plans.
- Refine differentiation so that students are challenged at their individual level in independent learning and across subjects.
- Evaluate school progress data comparatively with similar schools.
- Broaden the strategies for sharing good instructional practice within and across grades.

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.

The strong bonds between students, teachers and parents at Alley Pond, reflect the experienced leadership and clear vision of the principal. The ethos is one of openness, warmth, tolerance and the valuing of each individual. This is crucial to the success of a school with one third special education students, many requiring individual support. Parents welcome the strong partnership the school offers and share its goals. As a result, the school is successful and inclusive. Students enjoy their school and are keen to attend.

Teachers plan together effectively. They receive very good feedback from observations by the administration. These are both areas that have improved well since the last review. Teachers are supported very well in their work by high quality professional development, but do not have sufficient opportunities to observe one another's good practice. The curriculum is enriched extensively within and beyond the school day. In line with the recommendation of the previous review, the school has implemented a fully comprehensive system for the recording and management of data, which is consistently and rigorously applied. Consequently, administration, subject leaders, grade teams and teachers make informed and relevant planning decisions very well. The inquiry team is equally well-informed. Very rigorous assessment procedures are used to identify those students for in-depth study. The schedule of class and school assessments leads to very good general planning. However, plans at whole school level are not set within strict time-frames to monitor the pace of implementation and to evaluate the outcomes for students. Further, plans do not have realistic, rigorous, measurable targets for expected student progress at class, grade and school level to judge their impact on achievement.

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's system for managing its comprehensive range of data is exemplary and followed rigorously by all staff. As a result, the administration has data at its fingertips. Teachers monitor students' achievement closely, and this contributes to the good progress they make. The administration knows the progress of students, classrooms, grades and all groupings in detail. Special education students are tracked especially well by their teachers, intervention services and through detailed, individual education programs. English language learners, similarly, are monitored very closely. The progress of boys

and girls and of different ethnic groups is analyzed and cross-referenced. Well-maintained student portfolios include periodic assessments and work samples. These are charted directly to the state standards for their grade on the portfolio cover for easy and effective overview of progress. Teachers are informed well about the pace of student progress from past and current class records of achievement in reading, writing and math. Individual conference notes provide very purposeful day-to-day information.

The administration carefully compares progress across students, classrooms and grades and over time. Anomalies and inconsistencies are thoroughly reviewed with the relevant teams. Less attention is given to comparing students' progress with those in similar schools. The development and systematic use of the classroom and student portfolio system has been very beneficial in establishing teachers' understanding of the use of data to inform instruction. As a result, teachers are trained well and prepared to integrate and use data from new programs. They talk very knowledgeably of their students' needs.

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.

Administrators and teachers formulate plans collaboratively at administration and grade levels. The school's plans for improvement are translated from the Comprehensive Education Plan onto a series of large monthly wall-planners, creating a novel 'living' revisable document. Post-its identify effectively actions for assessment, curriculum initiatives, professional development and significant meetings over the year. However, sharp criteria are not set to determine the expected qualitative and quantitative outcomes of the initiatives, in order to evaluate the impact of plans on student learning. High quality school guidance documentation informs each teacher of the curriculum and procedures expected for all grades and in all subjects. Rubrics determine expected reading progress.

Teachers individually and within the grade teams plan, review and revise instruction and next learning steps very effectively. They use their records well and group students to match reading needs or for specific inputs in math. Students at risk of not making grade level are supported well in building on their previous knowledge. Teachers consistently seek new ways to meet the many and varied needs of special education students. Students with learning difficulties and physical disabilities often make small, but highly celebrated, progress. Students are informed well of the expectations of learning through rubrics, 'essential questions' displayed around their classrooms and conferences with teachers. However, specific goal-setting for individuals and cumulatively for classes, is not sufficiently developed. For example, records demonstrate a student's rate of progress through the reading program, but this is not used to set a reading target for the semester or year to gauge the pace of progress.

The principal works hard to ensure all members of the school community are 'on the same page'. The school ethos is one of openness, sharing and high expectation. Teachers of all classes have a common purpose to create an inclusive learning community. They value personal development in equal measure to high academic achievement. The school works hard to engage parents in its work, and supports them very effectively through English language workshops. Ease of access to the principal and teachers, telephone contact and the increasing use of email and blogs, give parents good opportunities to share their views. Regular parents' meetings and report cards help parents to understand their children's progress.

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's choices of reading and math programs allow teachers to make effective formative and summative assessments of students' progress. The math program provides stimulating additional challenge for higher-achieving students. Pacing calendars are used well to show what needs to be taught when. Day-to-day, teachers use the workshop methodology well, together with classroom approaches such as 'essential questions' to focus sharply on the key learning points. Teachers maintain high standards of lively, interactive teaching. Students value their teachers' sensitive support and especially enjoy the games and manipulatives which make 'exciting' lessons. While there is evidence of differentiation in direct teaching and focused activities, this is not sufficiently refined in independent learning times and across subjects. All classrooms are well-planned and managed environments. This is very apparent in the special needs classes and in the physiotherapy studio. Students integrate very well in hallways, showing mutual respect and good manners. Students with disabilities can practice their skills here safely. Attendance, which is higher than the average for the City, is tracked systematically.

The principal uses her budget wisely to equip classes, develop technology and hire staff in key areas such as support for English language learners. The school retains a broad curriculum in the arts despite budget limitations, by hiring part time music staff and by the extensive use of short-term dance and theatrical programs, visits and visitors. These inputs are well focused to specific grades. Programs to challenge higher-achieving students and personal initiative provide very significant enrichment.

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.

Professional development is aligned well with current school goals and is underpinned by data. Well-planned sessions assist teachers in implementing new ideas and skills. There is a strong focus on increasing the challenge to students and the acceleration of learning. The impact of this can be clearly seen in classrooms. The principal uses her expertise in special education well to help all teachers. She and the vice principal know the strengths and needs of teaching very well through perceptive observation. As a result, teachers receive detailed verbal or written feedback. They value these inputs and use the instructional guidance well. Grade meetings act as very good conduits for school improvement. Agendas are well-coordinated to unify strategies across the school. Teachers take advantage of lessons modeled in the lab-site classrooms. They are very reflective and openly discuss their work. They visit each other's classes informally, but do not undertake focused observations to share knowledge and learn new techniques. New teachers benefit significantly from the school's comprehensive documentation and the individual guidance of their mentors. Consequently, they settle in quickly and apply planning and instructional competencies very well.

The school is as strongly committed to students' personal growth as it is to raising achievement academically. Students requiring specific inputs for learning or to meet emotional dilemmas are monitored and referred very quickly to members of the academic

intervention team. They, in turn, work very well in liaison with the pupil personnel team to support students' needs. The school's psychologist, social workers and guidance counselors make a valuable contribution not only to special education students, but also benefit the school as a whole. Students are very positive about the inclusive ethos, orderly but kindly discipline, and safe environment. Teachers support them well and unacceptable behavior is dealt with immediately. Students equally appreciate the vitality added to their experience by the numerous partnerships the school makes with visiting authors, theatre, puppet groups and dance organizations. The 'Journey to the Native American Indian' visit particularly captures their imagination.

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 principal and the school community share a very clear vision to create an inclusive school, dedicated to ensuring all students make the best possible progress, personally and academically. Leadership, communication and planning are devoted to this end. Although the school has identified goals and has well-considered strategies for improvement, it does not set out sufficiently clearly how it is going to achieve these. Periodic assessments are not linked directly to planning reviews. Interim points for evaluation of progress and necessary revision are not identified clearly. It is therefore difficult for the school to measure how well students are doing over time and the rate of their progress.

Teachers analyze data confidently from the comprehensive range of periodic State and commercially-generated tests to judge the medium-term impact of their work. As a result, they identify points for revising. They compare progress in their grade teams and make adjustments to planning and instruction, often with the guidance of the administration and instructional leaders. Such review has on occasion indicated that students were more advanced in their knowledge than expected, and consequently practices for day-to-day assessment have been modified. The administration is equally responsive to data. The decision to introduce new programs to support spelling and vocabulary across the school resulted from analyzing student achievement in periodic assessments. The school has identified one grade as not performing to expectation and consequently begun a strategic plan to make sure students gain the knowledge and skills they need to improve rapidly.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: PS 046 The Alley Pond School	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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	
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?				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?				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		