



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Hillside School

Elementary School 054

**86 - 02 127 Street
Queens
NY 11418**

Principal: Diane Jones

Dates of review: May 29 – 30, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Sue Alton

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Hillside School is an elementary school with 588 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 13% Black, 42% Hispanic, 2.0% White, and 43% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 10% 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 92.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 75% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is respected by students, staff and parents who value her openness and availability.
- The whole staff have a clear vision for continued improvement and have processes for managing change to support this.
- Teachers use data effectively to maintain a good understanding of the performance and progress of individual students
- Professional development supports teachers very well in developing their understanding of data to plan differentiated instruction.
- English language learners are tracked and supported effectively.
- The school has developed a number of creative opportunities, which effectively encourage parents to become involved and to share information.
- Students enjoy school and trust their teachers.
- Teachers work collaboratively and enjoy opportunities to plan and share strategies to support each other and to improve their instruction.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure all school plans are carefully prioritized using information from data.
- Include objectively measurable interim- and long-term goals and timescales for achieving them in all school plans.
- Establish rigorous and formally recorded systems to evaluate the effectiveness of all school plans against interim- and long-term goals.
- Ensure information from monitoring and evaluation processes is used consistently to inform whole school planning and other plans.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made some progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Students, staff and parents respect the principal and value her openness and availability. One teacher said, “She’s very approachable and professional and she respects the work we do.” All staff have a clear vision for the future of the school and the many changes the school has made in the last year demonstrate the effectiveness of the school’s systems for managing change. Teachers work together collaboratively and enjoy a range of opportunities to work together and share strategies to improve their instruction.

Since the last review, the school has significantly improved systems for collating data. Staff are confident in analyzing it, using this information to plan and track student progress. Professional development supports teachers very well in improving their use of data to plan differentiated instruction. Using data, teachers effectively maintain a good understanding of the performance and progress of individual students and the inquiry team supports teachers well in this process. Using data, the inquiry team has identified a focus group of bi-lingual students. The project involves planning specific work programs to improve their attainment in English language arts. The team plans to disseminate the project evaluation to teachers to support planning in class. The school tracks and supports English language learners effectively.

The school does not use data effectively as a tool for whole school planning. Plans are not consistently prioritized using information from data and do not feature objectively measurable interim- and long-term goals with timescales for achieving them. There is no formal process for evaluating and monitoring plans and this information is not used consistently to inform new plans including whole school planning.

Parents appreciate the range of opportunities to be involved in school including workshops, visits and “breakfast with the principal”. These provide good opportunities for parents to share information about their children as well as learning how they can better support them with schoolwork at home. Students enjoy school and trust their teachers. They said, “The teachers know all the students and they make our lessons fun.”

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.

Administration, academic cabinet and teachers have a good understanding of the performance of each student. In addition, academic cabinet maintain an appropriate overview of classes and grades. The school tracks special education students appropriately and regularly evaluates their progress against individual education plans and their class goals. It tracks English language learners carefully from the moment they enter school and clear baselines are established. Teachers use data systematically to drive instruction and to prepare resources for these students. Good communication exists between teachers of English language learners and class teachers to ensure that the group work effectively supports class work. The school uses data appropriately to consider the progress of different groups. It targets higher achieving students for enrichment opportunities outside school. An investigation into boys' achievement led to purchasing a range of books to motivate them to read more. Teachers say the impact of this is seen in reading logs, where boys are reading more than previously. The school is beginning to consider how analysis of the performance of different ethnic groups can support them further in improving achievement.

Professional development effectively supports teachers in gaining confidence and expertise in data analysis. The introduction of assessment binders supports this process well. In order to facilitate data analysis and organization, the school is purchasing teacher laptops. The school compares results with similar schools and works closely with other schools in the network to identify issues and discuss strategies and ideas together. This collaboration resulted in teachers establishing data binders to collate all the data and information about their students. Further visits within the network, has led to improvement in teacher understanding of data analysis to raise achievement.

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 academic cabinet sets goals, but often these are descriptive and not easily measurable, limiting the school's ability to monitor their achievement. Although teachers collaborate well to set objectively measurable student goals and there is some discussion about expectations for the regular benchmarking periods, there is no systematic whole school process for setting measurable interim goals. The inquiry team leads on supporting teachers to develop their skills in data use and has effectively increased teacher confidence in tracking and analyzing individual student progress. The inquiry team used data to identify fifteen bi-lingual students and their focus is to improve achievement in English language arts. The team analyzed the issues and made plans to teach specific skills, identifying short-term goals and benchmarking periods as part of the process. This work is still in the early stages but the team reports that they are "starting to see growth". Although there are no formal plans or evaluation processes for the project, the minutes of the regular meetings reveal the discussions about goals, progress and plans focused on using data to analyze progress and to set goals.

Goals are communicated to the school community, but the recording of these and understanding is varied. Students know their long-term goals, but are less clear about interim goals, limiting student understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. A few students refer to rubrics helping them to know what they need to aim for next. Parents know about long-term and interim- goals for their children and have some understanding of whole schools goals. The school provides a good range of information to parents about their children's progress, which parents value. The school often translates the information and includes workshops, leaflets, formal and informal meetings, phone conversations and the popular "breakfast with the principal" sessions. This range of activities also provides good opportunities for parents to provide useful information to the school about their children.

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 curriculum is reviewed regularly and new programs and approaches are selected which provide relevant data, for example a math computer program. Students and parents appreciate the increased opportunities for art and dance. Although the school has no gymnasium, which restricts some sporting activities, each class takes yoga and there is a range of small equipment to use in limited space outside. Administration holds teachers accountable for student progress through performance data, the work students produce in class and frequent observations of instruction. Teacher assessment binders form the basis of discussion with administration to ensure that no student is overlooked. Teachers track individual student progress effectively. The principal uses data to make appropriate budgetary decisions. Now that teachers are confident in analyzing data to improve instruction, the school identified that data needs to be easily accessible. As a result, the school is to provide teachers with laptops.

Most lessons are interesting and appropriately differentiated to meet the needs of students within the class. Teachers are beginning to develop more opportunities for cross-curricular working, which motivates students well. Social studies is integrated with English language arts, through a project on "city landscapes". Following professional development at a museum, teachers planned their projects, focusing on buildings, architecture and travel. The project culminated in a visit for students and parents to the same museum. This successfully enabled students and their parents to share a similar experience, which they could continue to discuss at home to reinforce learning. Students enjoy school and trust their teachers. As one student said, "This school is like my second home. At home, the family is there to protect us, in the school the principal, assistant principal and teachers are there. If there's a problem, they'll help." The school rewards good attendance and there are appropriate strategies to follow up absences, resulting in attendance improving

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.

Teachers value the frequent observations by the principal. As one teacher says, "It's done in a positive way that motivates us to change." The school uses information from observations and tracking student progress to plan differentiated professional

development. The main focus over the last year was data use and the principal focused on this in her observations. The impact is clear as most teachers maintain their assessment binders and use data effectively to plan differentiated instruction. As a result of the teacher survey, administration took effective action to improve opportunities for teachers to meet, to discuss practice, plan and share ideas, which has helped them to improve their practice. Teachers new to the school appreciate their school based induction program, as well as the City program and continuous support from their colleagues. Youth development, guidance and counseling provide appropriate support to students and their families. Parents value the work of parent support. Students enjoy opportunities to support the community through activities such as “penny harvest”, showing great pride as they presented their cheques to community members. Partnerships with outside organizations support a range of activities, for example, the YMCA. Students enjoy these opportunities.

The school runs smoothly. Improved communication systems enable teachers to be more involved in the workings of the school. Distributed leadership is beginning to be developed. Students are well-behaved and courteous at all times although students are noisy before school and at lunchtimes. Some parents and students observe there is not enough supervision before school and at lunchtime and that occasionally these times are not as positive as they could be. The security officers are friendly and welcoming and students and parents appreciate their work to keep the school safe.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The positive changes the school has made in the last year show the school's systems for managing change are effective. However, using data to plan and set goals is still relatively new to the school. Without this, the school is not in as strong position as it could be to develop quickly. Whilst interim goals are set in some instances, practice is inconsistent and the school does not systematically record these in school plans. Benchmarks are set for checking progress and this is used regularly for students. In their planning, some members of the academic cabinet consider objectively measurable goals and timescales for reaching them but this is not consistently the case and they do not systematically link to the Comprehensive Education Plan. Although leaders use data to make strategic decisions, this is not part of a systematic process which drives goal setting or improvement planning. The introduction of teams with specific responsibilities, such as writing the Comprehensive Education Plan, is an effective process to engage a range of personnel in whole school planning. The school sets goals for teachers based on long-term outcomes and checks progress towards these at regular intervals. In some cases, interim goals are discussed. More formal procedures to document this process are agreed for the new semester. Teachers and faculty use a range of periodic assessments to track the progress of students and the effectiveness of plans and interventions. This information is used appropriately to revise plans and support.

The whole staff have a clear vision for the future of the school, which as the principal says, “is for all students, one day to be on grade level and to think and learn independently”. Staff value the improved opportunities to meet and understand the whole school vision. As one teacher said, “In order to make it work, we need to share and work together. We understand the expectations now and how the school works. This will help us to achieve our goal.”

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Hillside 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