



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Chester Park School

Elementary School 062

**97-25 108 Street
Queens
NY 11419**

Principal: Angela O'Dowd

Dates of review: May 12 - 13, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Richard Woolf

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

Chester Park is an elementary school with 1006 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 7% Black, 28% Hispanic, 2% White, and 63% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 68% eligibility.

The school is barrier free which allows for a number of students with limited mobility and wheelchair users to be integrated into the general education population.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- A principal focusing entirely on the needs of her staff and students leads the school exceptionally well in the use of data and improving student learning.
- Support from the assistant principals is of the highest quality in the monitoring and revision of the school's aspirations and goals.
- Teachers and administrators use data very positively in every aspect of their work to inform instruction and student learning outcomes.
- The school's understanding of the needs of its special education students and English language learners is very good.
- The school demands the high expectations of everyone associated with it and it is evident this acts as a key motivational force.
- Parents acknowledge the positive impact the school has on raising the educational aspirations of their children.
- The school provides its students with an engaging and challenging curriculum that includes a first class technology and arts program.
- The principal's ability to provide the school with resources that entirely focus on improving student learning is of the highest order.
- The respect and trust the entire school places in each other is first class.
- The students' benefit from a staff, which dedicates itself to providing them with a high quality education.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure strategies are in place to continue to challenge all students but particularly those capable of very high achievements.
- Establish clarity of assessment across the school to match the ever-changing needs of students and which is fully understood and implemented by all staff.
- Evaluate the "design your own" assessments for literacy so that they are authentic measures of student achievement and valued as such by teachers.

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.

Chester Park offers its students a very good educational experience. The principal demonstrates strong leadership and management skills and this is evident throughout. Her vision of continual improvement for all students has the endorsement of her assistant principals and the entire school community. The teachers are diligent, hardworking and constantly seeking to improve their own practice and thereby their students learning opportunities.

The school uses technology very well to analyze and interrogate data. The use of such data is a key factor in the continuous improvement of student outcomes as seen in external examinations. This is particularly the case for special education students and English language learners. The school sets exceptionally high expectations for its students and parents and their response is very positive. The school is a place where students and staff work harmoniously together and incidents of poor behavior are a rarity. The school curriculum is engaging and challenging with a focus and expectation that every student can achieve. However, the school has yet to set its highest achieving students with the rigorous targets as it does for other groups. The principal has successfully risen to the challenge of providing staff with the technology needed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Classrooms are now equipped with 15 SMARTboards and computers are now used regularly in classrooms to increase students' motivation. The school is clearly a place where learning takes place on a daily basis with reflection playing a key role in its further development. The principal recognizes this as she seeks ways to evaluate the "design your own" assessments for literacy so that they are authentic measures of student achievement and valued as such by teachers.

Since the previous Quality Review, the school has clearly demonstrated good progress, especially in aligning professional development to specific teacher needs and differentiation in lessons as well as expanding professional development programs for data analysis. The work of the inquiry teams is ongoing and there is substantial data to show progress within the identified group of English language learners. The school is now seeking ways to extend this approach of in-depth data interrogation across the general education population.

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 is very skillful in its use of data for both administrative and teaching purposes. Every teacher is able to access an array of data through the exceptionally efficient and effective use of technology. This supports the large amounts of qualitative data they have in terms of running records. Teachers amass large quantities of data on every student to help them inform their instructional strategies. This is invaluable as the school continues to improve its outcomes in external examinations. This approach of improving student examinations is only part of the way the school is developing the education of the whole child and excellent use of data is supporting every teacher's work. The administration utilizes data with a high degree of sophistication and confidence to demonstrate continuous school improvement.

The school is particularly adept in the use of data as it pertains to special education students and English language learners. There are clear and precise actions taken as a result of data interrogation, defining goals and learning outcomes for these groups. The recent test outcomes demonstrate that this year all grade five students should achieve above a level one in external examinations in all subjects. This is confirmation of the predictions the school undertook as part of its on going data analysis. The school has a complete understanding of the needs of its ethnic and gender groups. This enables them to respond effectively to any performance differentials the data may reveal during the year. The school is exceptionally proactive in the comparison of itself to other or similar schools. The principal uses this actively to seek ways of improving the school. However, there are many educational aspects in which other schools now seek out this institution for support and guidance. Others acknowledge the school as a site of good practice, especially in terms of its use of data. Teachers embrace technology in an exceptionally commendable way. They are able to use a wide range of software to assist them in the use of data. This affords them a complete understanding of the performance of their students. Over the course of the year the school tracks student's progress using both longitudinal and horizontal data. The outcome proves effective in deciding next-steps learning and the demonstration of progress.

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 school develops its goals in a collegiate manner. The very precise goal setting for special education students and English language learners is proving most effective in advancing their learning outcomes. All students are aware of their individual reading and writing goals. They are also able to articulate the next steps for learning to achieve their targets for the year. However, the school does not yet set challenging enough targets for its highest achieving students. The principal acknowledges this as she seeks to implement a consistent assessment policy for the whole school.

The school is constantly seeking ways of sharing its overall goals with the wider community. The introduction of subject specific newsletters goes a long way to develop this. The work of the parent coordinator in engaging parents to the educational process through individual workshops is proving most beneficial. The result is that many more parents understand the educational process and this better prepares them to work with their children at home. Attendance at parent conferences is phenomenally high and teachers have the opportunity to talk through individual student targets with parents. This reflects the high expectations the principal has of both students and their parents. Parents

acknowledge the school to be very good but over the last five years, the improvements in terms of academic achievement are remarkable. They attribute this entirely to the principal and her acceptance that “second best is not good enough”. The school adopts a very open policy with parents and teachers regularly exchange information with parents about how to improve the learning opportunities of the students.

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 uses the mandated curriculum but adapts it imaginatively to meet the demands of students. A number of additional activities are in place to stretch and challenge students with a positive impact upon their learning. With the support of outside consultants, the school continually strives to improve the writing skills of its students. The outcome of such activities is the whole school writing continuum from kindergarten through grade five. The process is incredibly effective in extending the writing skills of each student. The entire school community publicly celebrates such achievements by publishing each student’s work in bound individualized folders. To support the formal curriculum the school has an exceptional arts program that includes music, art, drama and dance. All students receive instruction in stringed instruments and the school has a fine string ensemble. The infusion of technology throughout the entire school is of the highest order. Teachers use it to engage their students and it is integral to their work. The principal is a strong advocate of using technology to support and enhance learning. There are numerous examples of teachers working collaboratively across subject areas. Student engagement in lessons is exceptionally high and differentiation is evident in all classrooms.

The principal is a most effective resource manager. Her budgetary skills are first class and her ability to support staff in their drive to improve instruction through the acquisition of appropriate teaching materials to achieve school goals is commendable. The budget is in total alignment with the school’s goals of improving student learning outcomes. This is a harmonious school. By providing a curriculum and after school program that is engaging to the students the school is preparing them to become life-long learners.

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.

The school is proactive in its approach to professional development. Teachers receive programs, which specifically align to their individual needs. The effect is substantially to improve instruction and student learning. Strategic professional development for the whole staff clearly focuses on the achievement of the school’s goals. Teachers work collaboratively, embracing opportunities to plan together and observe each other teach in a non-threatening manner. This is proving most productive in raising the levels of instruction. The adoption of the “Japanese lesson studies technique” in math is a powerful tool whereby teachers closely observe student interaction in lessons and not just how the teacher instructs. The level of professional debate amongst the teachers is of the highest order. The notion being that continuous interaction between staff helps to enhance

student outcomes. The level of professional debate amongst the teachers is of the highest order. The notion being that continuous interaction between staff helps to enhance student outcomes. Teachers feel the principal empowers them to become instructional leaders and greatly appreciate this as a means of developing their professional integrity.

The school has a phenomenal system of support to provide for the students social and emotional needs. This team encompasses a wide range of professionals who work alongside teachers to ensure each student receives the appropriate services to reach their full potential. Numerous outside organizations fully support the school in its endeavors to raise the academic achievements of the students. This is a school with incredibly high expectations for its students to succeed. As a result, incidents of poor behavior are rare due to the high expectations teachers have of their students. Clearly students expect that school is where learning takes place and poor behavior is likely to affect this belief. This enables teachers to maximize their instruction, with a positive outcome upon student learning.

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.

All teachers have an opportunity to reflect on their work from the previous year before the school establishes its goals for the coming year. This information marries in with the principal's own strategic goals for the school. The senior leadership team then determines the specific goals the school is to adopt for the year.

The school monitors the progress of its students on a regular basis. Using a wide range of interim assessment data the school is able to verify progress in line with its set benchmarks. Monitoring takes place within a time-framed program that all staff are aware of at the beginning of the school year. Teachers formulate their own goals and the administration regularly monitors their progress in achieving them. The assistant principals are instrumental in this process. They have a clear focus in ensuring overall school improvement progresses with pace and rigor. Through the close monitoring and revision that takes place teachers are able to adapt their teaching techniques to match individual learning styles of the students. The outcome of this is all students in grade level 5 are performing at Level 2 and above in external examinations.

This is a very reflective school and one that constantly seeks ways to improve its practice. Therefore the re-visitation of plans leads to an immediate response when there is evidence to show practice is not having the positive impact the school seeks. All teachers participate in the yearly planning cycle. They each spend a day with the school's consultants to reflect and offer suggestions for the school's overall goals. This gives teachers ownership of the process and a feeling that their contributions are important in raising school achievement. The principal is very clear in how she sees the development of the school. Her over-riding principle is for every student to maximize his or her potential through the better use of technology and the development of an 'e-learning' school. The provision of a school with a strong work ethic features clearly in the vision. The entire school community subscribes to this and is supportive of her endeavors. This school is a professional learning community providing an exciting educational opportunity for its students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Chester Park School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?					X
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?					X
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?					X
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?				X	
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?					X
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?					X
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?					X
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?					X
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?					X
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?					X
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?					X
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

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