



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Robert E Peary School

Elementary-High School 075

**1666 Hancock Street
Queens
NY 11385**

Principal: Brenda Gallashaw

Dates of review: November 29 - 30, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Robert E Peary School is an elementary-high school with 333 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 30.3% Black, 43.5% Hispanic, 13.8% White, 0.4% Native American and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 11.7% English language learners and 89% special education students. Boys account for 73% of the students enrolled and girls account for 27%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 85.3%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

This multi-sited school, known as P75Q, predominantly serves special education students. The main site is located in the Ridgewood section of Queens with other sites in close proximity. The psychiatric program at Elmhurst Hospital provides instruction for elementary, intermediate and high school students in both an in-patient and partial hospitalization program. All students in this school have an individual education plan. The student population requires support for emotional challenges, cognitive delay, autism, and autistic-like tendencies. Students receive the full range of services. Instruction takes place with staffing ratios according to need: 6:1:1, 8:1:1, 8:1:2 and 12:1:1 (students, teacher and paraprofessionals respectively) and includes self-contained and inclusion classes. At present 62% of students participate in standardized assessment and 38% participate in alternate assessment.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principals show determination to drive the school forward.
- The administration has a good overview of all sites and strives for equity and unity.
- There is a strong environment of trust and mutual respect between all staff and students.
- The principal and assistant principals conduct frequent classroom observations to provide useful feedback to teachers.
- Teachers and paraprofessionals work well together to deliver planned programs that facilitate academic and personal development.
- Attendance is a high priority for the school, to ensure continuity of learning.
- The school has good communication systems for parents and actively seeks their participation in the students' education.
- The school behavior plan is an effective tool that helps students to manage their behaviors.
- The broad curriculum includes many opportunities for physical and artistic expression which successfully contribute to student progress.
- Parents appreciate the planned efforts of teachers and related service providers that make a difference for their child.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that data informs planning for the needs of all students, including high achievers, through differentiated questioning and activities.
- Further develop data analysis capability within the school through the use of technology and associated training.
- Establish more formal opportunities for staff to share expertise and turnkey training.
- Develop further the planned integration of technology across the school as a learning tool, and ensure engagement.

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 Robert E Peary School works hard to meet the diverse and complex needs of its student population, a large proportion of whom are also transient. The school is mindful of the student's circumstances when scrutinizing assessments and data to plan instruction and interventions. Teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers work together with the needs of the student, as identified in their individual education plans, clearly in mind.

The principal shows excellent leadership with warmth and professionalism. She knows her staff and students well. Many of the staff have served the school over several years and have progressed professionally within the establishment. The principal and her cabinet work cohesively with complementary expertise and interests. The assistant principals diligently carry out their delegated responsibilities and all work to maintain unity and equity among the different sites.

The cabinet has a realistic view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. It works to support teachers to further improve literacy and math outcomes. Differentiated programs are linked to student needs but some individual programs are not sufficiently fine-tuned to achieve the best progress in a number of many lessons. Autistic students have carefully designed programs that sequentially build academic and personal skills. The school has evaluated the reading programs it uses with different student populations to ensure relevance and alignment. Data analysis shows the behavior management program, "The Choice is Yours", continues to have a positive impact. Teachers are more adept at conveying high expectations.

Recommendations from the previous Quality Review form part of an ongoing program to strengthen the ability of staff to use data to improve student outcomes. The administration is fully aware of the need to refine differentiation even further and to harness technological capabilities that lead to improved learning outcomes. The budget is carefully managed to provide professional development and support. There is recognition that time for formal turnkey training and to share experience and expertise is not sufficient at present.

The school data inquiry team is working well. It has established its cohort of students through analysis of test results. It is gathering further individual assessment data and has concluded which interventions are suitable. The principal and staff have a shared determination to make a positive difference for their diverse student 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 proficient.

The school uses a range of considered assessments and tests to monitor performance across the school. It is mindful of the individual student and their circumstances in its use of hard data. Standardized assessment results are analyzed to measure overall student performance and progress including some analysis by groups and subgroups, such as by ethnicity and English language learners. Timely and effective targeted interventions are implemented and class groupings are altered. The school tries to place students so that they are in standardized or alternate assessment classes. As incremental progress for some students is understandably small due to individual needs an importance is placed on other data including actual students' work. For alternate assessment students particularly, the Brigance assessments and the Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS) tools are used to gauge development of communication and life skills.

The administration is skilled at utilizing data and regularly reviews all available sources. They look for patterns and trends over time, although this is not always directly comparable due to continual changes in the student population. Students move placements, such as the 25 students who have moved to environments with less intensive support so far this year. There has also been an influx of students, for example with three inclusion classes added in the last two years. The school also compares its performance as reflected in test data with that of other schools which offer similar programs or have similar populations. Links are made to share best practice.

While there is a large amount of data available to the staff not all teachers avail themselves of this data. The school is working to extend expertise in the use of data to finely differentiate instruction for learning, particularly through technology. The school is embracing new tools such as Acuity and Scantron as they become available and staff see the possible benefits these programs offer.

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 school believes that inappropriate behaviors affect all students' ability to learn. Accordingly the overarching aims of the school are to improve academic skills, especially in English language arts and math, with a converse reduction in incidents of unhelpful behaviors. Behavior goals are written into individual education plans. These plans underpin the daily work of the school. Teachers work with parents and related service providers to plan meaningful and realistic goals. The individual education plans are reviewed four times a year. Thorough assessment and record keeping means that goals are modified as required. Student placements are considered, as another of the school aims is to help the student move into environment with less intensive support.

Weekly pupil personnel committee meetings are open to all staff and focus on particular students to fine-tune plans and consider further action in the light of data. Monthly academic intervention service meetings target students who are “promotion in doubt” with an emphasis on early intervention. Push-in and pull-out interventions with the use of programs such as Great Leaps and Voyager result in a decrease in numbers of these targeted students.

The school has established good communication systems for parents. High expectations for behavior and academic effort are reinforced through weekly communication notebooks and daily behavior sheets. Translation services are used to reach many families. The school actively seeks parental participation in each student’s education. Home circumstances mean that fewer parents are involved than the school wishes, despite the best efforts of teachers and the parent coordinator. Involved parents appreciate the planned efforts of teachers and related service providers that make an improved difference for their child.

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 curriculum is carefully chosen with the needs of the different student populations in mind. The Teachers’ College writing program provides a clear framework so that students experience success and enjoy the publishing parties. For example, student work on sharks is compiled into a book with accompanying pictures, which is proudly on display. Balanced math takes a similar workshop model to lead the student toward independence. Teachers adapt materials and select activities with student needs in mind to varying degrees. Students with autism have clearly defined work schedules based on data and teachers keep comprehensive records. The picture exchange communication symbols (PECS) are suitably used for students with limited verbal communication. All standardized and alternate assessment students are exposed to the arts through drama and creative movement, fine art including ceramics, and music lessons. Teachers note the positive effect of the arts on student self-esteem and behavior.

Teachers feel accountable for student progress and improving performance. The individual education plan coordinator supports teachers in meeting the student’s goals. Teachers work well with paraprofessionals to deliver planned programs that facilitate academic and personal development. In the best lessons careful differentiation based on data is evident for all students through planned activities. Yet, not all questioning involves all students, nor checks comprehension as well as developing higher level thinking skills. The school is committed to technology and has refurbished the computer lab. SMART boards and other technological devices are sometimes used to good effect and encourage student engagement.

Students particularly enjoy the opportunities for physical education, such as basketball, and the arts. There is respect for students, who feel that teachers are fair and are there for them. The school recognizes the importance of continuity in learning so attendance is a high priority for the school. The good systems in place mean that there is an upward

trend. The rate of 88.9% so far this year is very good for this special education student population, the majority of whom are bussed.

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 principal and assistant principals have good knowledge of staff strengths. They have a good overview of all sites and strive to maintain parity. Frequent walkthroughs mean that support is provided as required. Coaches and the individual education plan coordinator are readily available and provide ongoing materials and ideas. Staff are collegial and share information informally as well as in common preparation sessions. The school places high value on professional growth and many staff attend external training. Professional development is clearly linked to the school goals. Mentoring and induction for new staff is thorough. The opportunities for formal turnkey training are limited but the school wishes to explore further the occasions for these.

The school is, "a well-oiled machine", with clear procedures. There is a concerted effort by staff to stress the positive and reward, rather than punish. Students understand the system and class rules are explicit in student-friendly language. Analysis of data from the school-wide information system and occurrence reporting system showed the, "hot spots", for infractions. Additional procedures were put in place together with a remedial program to alleviate these. As a result, reported inappropriate behaviors have significantly decreased. Guidance and related service providers work cohesively within the individual education plan parameters.

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 assistant principals show determination to drive the school forward through the use of data to ensure rigorous instruction. There are clear, measureable goals for improving student outcomes. The cabinet review qualitative data regularly to maintain overview of all sites at their meetings. The behavior intervention team examines behavior management reports and the pupil personnel committee looks at student data to assess student placement needs. Academic intervention and attendance data also inform strategic realignment of resources and personnel if required. Teachers gather data within the classroom from informal assessments and students' work for both alternate assessment and standardized assessment students. At all levels there is an ongoing collection and review of data to pursue the school goals for improvement. The school also welcomes input from District coaches and the cohort leader that contributes to its progress. As a school with several sites, which serve students with many needs including emotional and behavioral, responses are flexible and effective. The school continues to work steadfastly despite its many challenges to make an even bigger improvement for its students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Robert E Peary 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 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 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	