



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Captain Vincent G Fowler School

Elementary School 108

**108-10 109 Avenue
Queens
NY 11420**

Principal: Marie Biondillo

Dates of review: April 14 - 16, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Tony Hubbard

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Captain Vincent G Fowler School is an elementary school with 1307 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 8% Black, 29% Hispanic, 2% White, and 61% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 94.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 60% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's challenging vision for the school is thoroughly embedded in the excellent planning, teaching and caring of her dedicated staff.
- The assistant principals, supported by the coaches, exercise a very high quality of instructional leadership.
- Precisely targeted and highly effective professional development underpins everything the school does.
- The school's resources of staff, money and materials are wisely and shrewdly deployed.
- Teachers have been quick to assimilate new skills in data-gathering and analysis resulting in a focused understanding of every student's needs.
- Leadership and teachers are exceptionally effective at using data to accelerate the learning of those students with the greatest needs.
- The school is highly effective in engaging parents, particularly those not fluent in English, and in helping them to support their children's learning.
- The school is flexible and innovative in identifying strategies to help students to progress.
- Administration has succeeded in providing a broad, balanced and highly engaging curriculum, exceptionally strong in the arts.
- Because they are well taught, students of all ages and needs produce a large quantity of mature, well-formed, thoughtful and well-presented writing.
- The school has excellent, educationally productive links with parents and the wider community.

What the school needs to improve

- Proceed with plans to accelerate even further the progress and development of higher-achieving students.
- Build on the excellent practice in assessment and reporting in the core subjects to provide parents with a more rounded picture of their children's education and personal growth.
- Further develop differentiated instruction so that all students have activities and tasks that meet their individual learning needs.

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 outstanding.

Captain Vincent G Fowler Elementary is a remarkable school, led and managed by an exceptional principal. In the hallways, everything from the notices welcoming parents to the host of student artwork and writing exemplify the highest quality and rigorous attention to detail. Every classroom projects the same message of high standards for all students and models complete consistency in the modes of planning, alongside articulating and supporting the curriculum and goals for students. No wonder the school has enabled its needier students to make exemplary gains and is now rightly seeking to accelerate even further the progress of its higher achieving students. One young student, asked what was special about the school, said: "The principal is good because she chooses good teachers that help us and are funny." She is a consummate manager and leader, who has surrounded herself with excellent administrators, teachers and staff, expertly directed and supported with resources and scheduling to produce the best for the students, combining the highest expectations with engagement and good humor.

Leadership and faculty use all sources of information at their disposal to ensure that plans and goals at every level are informed by the actual needs of each student and group, including, since the last review, those of students admitted in mid-year. Their analysis of data is sophisticated and penetrating, because it is built into the schedules and supported extremely well by professional development. This is evident from the excellent work of the inquiry team in further refining goals for English language learners. Professional development in every form is the lifeblood of the school and supports every policy. The principal and her assistant principals exercise outstanding instructional leadership. Teachers and other staff collaborate reflectively in everything they do and are fully part of the school's strategic decisions. They express amazement at the principal's ability to conjure resources and support out of her budget for every change and initiative, including the improvement in class sizes, following last year's review. Parents, guidance and outside agencies are brought to bear to secure a complete picture of each child and group. The principal uses a battery of "fail-safes to make sure no one falls through the cracks". This information is constantly being updated and used to inform the teachers' planning and goals for their students. Equally, at school level they inform the strategies and planning of an administration not afraid to change approach if something is not working quite right. Parents are kept fully informed about their children's progress and personal growth, although written reports concentrate on English language arts and math. Administration has constructed a broad, balanced and engaging curriculum, strong in the arts and enriched by after-school activities and enrichment. Teaching is of a high quality and enables the students to do their best and grow as young individuals, cared for and valued for themselves. That, in so huge an elementary school, is an outstanding 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 outstanding.

Both administration and teachers have an excellent understanding of the development, achievements and needs of every student. In their search for this full understanding, they leave no source of information untapped, drawing upon the knowledge of parents, guidance and the qualitative knowledge of teachers no less than the quantitative data available externally and from self-generated tests. Practice in the analysis of quantitative data is exemplary. Administration has been quick to provide all teachers with the skills to interpret and use the data and has imaginatively employed an expert member of support staff to generate reports on request, leaving administration and teaching staff free to concentrate on students' learning. The use of Acuity is fully developed, enabling administration and teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses at the level of individual students, but also of group, grade, class and school. Teachers and administrators are using all the functions of this system, including the drawing down of suitable activities to remedy weaknesses in particular groups or strands of the subjects. The school is acquiring and using a wide range of other assessment systems, as well as their own customised tests, to track reading levels against predictive English language arts grade levels. As new information is generated, it is made available immediately to all who need to know. Everyone involved with students immediately writes short feedback notes, to be e-mailed and included in class teachers' class binders so that all concerned have an exceptional understanding of students' progress and needs. Indeed the students themselves are familiar with and use software to self-assess. New admissions mid-year are immediately benchmarked and tracked. No group or individual need goes unnoticed or under-analyzed. Administration has identified a wide and challenging range of comparator schools and regularly checks that its performance is as good as it should be.

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 outstanding.

None of the information the school gathers goes to waste. The frequent grade, subject, collaborative and other meetings always start with refined data analysis and proceed to the setting or revision of precise goals for students, groups or the whole school to achieve. As a result, goals for individuals and groups are tweaked rapidly and precisely. The consistent clarity and precision of goals for both classes and individuals and the effectiveness of differentiation are striking, including exciting enrichment classes established for high achievers. The work of the inquiry team in refining the focus on the specific areas in which English language learners have difficulty has been impressive. For example, they have given the same grade 3 students the predictive tests for both their own grade and for grade 2 and have established that the key weakness to address

has been the language of the tests themselves. So they have already put in place and implemented effectively the necessary extra focus on which English language learners and class teachers concentrate. The case study of three students in fact demonstrates the effectiveness of differentiated strategies adopted in the course of the study. The clarity and differentiated appropriateness of goals at every level, including a class to help Hispanic parents to support their children's reading, is a key factor in the students' many exemplary learning gains and in the excellent performance. This performance has been sustained over three years in science, social studies and in the high quality of art. The principal has very high expectations of her staff, demonstrated in a constructive way that energizes them and is matched by their dedication and high expectations for all the students. The students are very familiar with their goals and share responsibility for setting and reviewing them. Expectations are made clear to all stakeholders and the school takes every opportunity to welcome parents, to engage them in their children's work and to keep them informed about their children's progress. Reporting however, concentrates on the mandated core and does not yet provide a fully rounded picture of their children's progress in all subject areas. Parents are constantly in the school, either helping with some aspect of learning, meeting to discuss policy, or in one of the plethora of support and education programs that the school makes available and accessible.

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 outstanding.

The consistency and quality of educational provision is exceptional because administration has established a culture of goal-directed collaboration and reflection, informed by data. It has supported this with structured meetings at class, grade and subject levels, so that the consistency of well targeted, engaging teaching and learning, much of it of high quality, is exceptional. Teachers always know what other teachers in other classes and subjects are teaching and make a point of cross-referencing. Classroom management consistently allows for one-to-one student conferencing, assessment and goal review, while other students work profitably at a variety of other tasks. The organization is thoroughly inclusive, allowing special education students to be taught in general education classes with push-in teaching as much as possible. Scheduling is cleverly organized to enable a variety of flexible groupings, including excellent special classes for gifted and talented students. The curriculum itself is exceptionally broad and balanced. There is a strong emphasis on non-fiction in English language arts, creating very broad multidisciplinary subject matter for students to study, and continuous art and music provision from kindergarten through grade 5 for all students. Long term opportunities to study art have resulted in art skills progressing so that students produce work of a mature and high quality. All this is enriched by a host of extra-curricular activities, from chess and designing a website to softball, tennis and cricket. All the students have the chance to shine at something. Because of shrewd budgeting, the quality of the learning environment and the availability of resources are excellent. Every classroom is thoughtfully laid out and has attractive and relevant display. Every hallway demonstrates the high standard and thoughtfulness of the writing of students of all ages, to be seen also in quantity in their folders. Murals draw students in to read. Students show strong skills in comprehension and note taking. The principal has also been flexible in the way she has employed additional staff to support needs

identified through the data in the school. The school tracks attendance and punctuality rigorously and follows it effectively so that levels are high and still rising.

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 outstanding.

The principal and her three assistant principals know exactly what is going on throughout the school because of the way they monitor constantly. Both formal and informal visits are the norm and are focused first on the students and what they are learning. Their follow-up records always include strengths and goals for improvement and are always revisited. Once a need for improvement is identified; whether through observation or through analysis of data, professional development is always linked to the process. The principals themselves guide but also model lessons as instructional leaders. Coaches model lessons for clusters of teachers, for example in an excellent demonstration lesson on the teaching of equivalence in math. Collaboration and mutual lesson observation is a way of life for these teachers, another important reason for the unusual consistency of quality and style. All staff, especially those new to teaching, felt very well supported by their mentors and by administration. The whole complex web of groupings and interventions in this huge elementary school operates like clockwork. An observer can only marvel at the fact that, in so large an institution, parents, staff and students can all feel so valued and well looked after as individuals. The sheer accessibility of administration and of teachers is impressive. Behavior has been so effectively handled that it is not an issue and suspensions are very low.

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 outstanding.

Monitor, evaluate, adjust, re-plan, support, and move on: that is what the administration does all the time with the utmost rigor. Under their influence, this is what teachers do and, ultimately, the students themselves. Goals, always directed to improving the progress and well-being of students and their families, are driven by data of all kinds and are under constant review. The strategies are invariably rigorously set in terms of measurable outcomes and are planned in detailed steps, themselves rigorously verifiable. This is as true of their goals for teachers as for their objectives for students. Changes of approach or even new directions can be seen in any meeting at any level in the school, all carefully but economically recorded at the time, and immediately copied to those that need to know. That so large a system can be so consistent and so consistently effective is a tribute to outstanding leadership and management. Now the administration is rightly satisfied that the essential systems for helping the most needy are properly functioning, they have moved on to the next issue identified from their analysis of global data; further raising the game of higher achieving students to match the very high levels that have been sustained in science and social studies. This administration and staff are well up to the challenge.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Captain Vincent G Fowler	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