



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Belle Harbor School

Elementary-Middle School 114

**134-01 Cronston Avenue
Queens
NY 11694**

Principal: Stephen Grill

Dates of review: April 10 - 11, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Peter Lewis

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Belle Harbor School is an elementary-middle school with 823 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 2% Black, 5% Hispanic, 90% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 3% 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 93.2%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Leaders and staff collect, analyze and share student assessment data well, so that the school has a good understanding of patterns in students' learning.
- Lower-achieving students, and those whose performance is causing concern, are supported well following accurate identification of their needs.
- Developments in data interpretation and in the curriculum have been rapid because of the high quality of teamwork across the school.
- Strategic planning and planning for student improvement are clear and well communicated, and ensure that all staff are active in securing progress.
- The development of the Core Knowledge program has significantly enhanced the curriculum, and enthuses and motivates staff and students.
- The principal's vision, particularly his high expectations for students, is very well supported by senior staff and so is strongly reflected across the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Make use of the good strategies of goal setting based on students' prior achievement in reading to set individual targets in other subjects.
- Further refine the technology curriculum so that a progression of knowledge, skills and understanding fully supports learning in all subjects.
- Ensure that teachers' planning consistently provides for students' different needs in class by matching activities to students' different abilities.
- Set objectives in all lessons that define precisely what students will learn so that they, and their teachers, will know when success has been achieved.

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.

Belle Harbor is a popular school that has a strong and developing reputation within its community and is significantly oversubscribed as a result. The principal was appointed three years ago and, since that time, has secured rapid improvement in the ways in which leaders and teachers make use of data to understand how to improve students' learning. The school sets challenging targets for student achievement but, except in reading, these are too general in nature. A similar feature is also seen in lessons, where the objectives planned by teachers are not always sufficiently precise to enable them or their students to recognize when success has been achieved. However, the school has ensured that curriculum development has created a very broad and stimulating range of experiences for students with the result that students are fully engaged in learning and enjoy coming to school.

In the year since its last quality review, the school has made sure that it has addressed the issues that were identified at that time. Teachers, well supported by senior staff, track student progress carefully and make effective use of information from assessments in ensuring that all groups learn well. Lessons often consider students' different needs, although this is not always reflected in the activities planned by teachers, which are generally the same for all students. Teachers collaborate well in planning and in seeking out best practices, which secures success in even complex developments so that they have a positive impact on students' motivation and learning. The school is a reflective community in which teachers actively review their practice in seeking ways to secure further improvement. The inquiry team is one example of this in the degree to which its findings are analyzed carefully and shared across the school. Members of the team are skilled in understanding data and, more importantly, in understanding the implications for improvement revealed by the analysis of student achievement. One consequence of this has been the validation of the school's emphasis on improving students' skills in interpreting non-fiction text, demonstrated by improvements in their achievement.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

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

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school has developed rapidly in its collection and analysis of data. Comprehensive data files are held centrally and at class and support levels. These are regularly updated and routine discussion between leaders and teachers ensures that there is a whole-school

understanding of student achievement. A clear picture of patterns and trends in students' performance helps the school to understand whether they are making sufficient progress. This analysis is particularly strong in English language arts and math, as a result of the close attention that the school is paying to all aspects of learning in these areas. For example, the recognition of the need to develop students' experience and confidence in non-fiction text was derived from careful test and item analysis of performance. This has led to a strong emphasis on this aspect, with changes to programs and resources. Early data points to an increase in student achievement as a result. Good comparisons of achievement are drawn across classes and grades so that the school can more accurately identify the reasons behind any dips in student performance.

The school analyzes the achievement of different groups of students well, particularly those who are lowest performing, who make rapid progress as a result of timely interventions. The recognition of the comparative underachievement of boys, for example, prompted the acquisition of resources and the introduction of programs tailored to their needs and interests. Academic intervention staff have comprehensive data on students who are causing concern, and make very good use of this in planning collaboratively with teachers to ensure that gaps in learning are addressed. There is a good understanding of trends in students' performance, particularly in looking at the patterns of progress measured by scale scores. The principal describes the initial publication of this, in data training, as "an eye opener" for teachers that enabled a greater emphasis to be placed on the development of strategies of differentiation. Nonetheless, the school acknowledges that more consistency is required in this and has developed clear plans to secure further improvement.

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.

There is good collaboration between leaders, support staff and teachers in setting goals for student achievement. Goals are challenging in that the school takes account of higher-achieving students in setting their goals to exceed grade expectation. In reading, the good knowledge that the school has developed of steps in students' learning is well used in setting projections of student performance, based on their prior achievement. This is good practice in that it enables teachers to plan from an accurate understanding of students' potential. However, this approach has yet to be adopted in other subjects in which, as a result, targets for achievement are more generic. Data is provided to teachers before the start of each year so that students' needs can be identified and planning can start from the earliest point. Information from teachers' assessments, together with the results of interim testing, is well used by teachers and leaders in identifying any weaknesses in learning at an early stage. To track gains in performance, the school has recently introduced a very clear cumulative record system to enable "at a glance" reference to students' progress. This record is not yet completed electronically, which hampers the school in importing data from the widest range of sources.

The school involves parents well in their children's learning. They know what their children will be learning through information provided in the handbook for each grade and appreciate the regular contact with the school that keeps them informed of their children's progress. As a result, they are proud of their children's achievement and know how they can help in supporting their work. Parents are rightly pleased with the high expectations set by the school, and are confident that the school is enthusing their children and

teaching them well. One echoed the general view in saying, “My child can’t wait to get into school. They teach them so much, and at an earlier stage than anywhere else!”

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 has worked hard and effectively to develop its curriculum. In particular, it has ensured that students receive a broad menu of experiences while maintaining a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The development of the Core Knowledge program has been very well planned and, because it has been introduced across all grades in the school, has enabled staff to learn from each other and so accelerate the program’s development. Grade teams, for example, have worked together to create lesson and unit plans from the curriculum maps developed at the start of the year. This has ensured a good level of consistency across grades, as well as full alignment with social studies requirements. The result is a rich and visually stimulating environment that demonstrates learning across an unusual breadth of subjects, and which provides students with very good opportunities to use, develop and refine their skills, particularly in literacy. They are enthusiastic about the breadth of learning to which they are exposed. Alongside very good systems that are consistently implemented, accounts for the school’s above-average attendance. The school has invested heavily in resources to support its curriculum development. Most importantly, the appointment of an assistant principal to lead Core Knowledge development has ensured rapid development in teachers’ confidence, while maintaining a good focus on literacy development. The very good provision of computer resources has begun to ensure that students develop their technology skills, particularly in word processing and art. The school has begun to consider the development of a more detailed curriculum map to exploit technology as a learning resource, particularly through math and presentational programs.

Teachers are well supported in using data to plan lessons that meet students’ needs. As a result, teachers’ skills in differentiation have developed rapidly, although the school acknowledges that greater consistency is still required. There are, for example, too few examples of different activities planned specifically at different levels of student understanding. While, for example, the school has moved well in ensuring that lessons are planned to identified standards and include a learning objective, these are too frequently general in nature. Consequently, both teachers and students are uncertain of how to recognize success or, therefore, of when it has been achieved.

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 is very well supported by the assistant principals in monitoring the quality of instruction. From these observations, as well as the accurate analysis of data, they have a clear understanding of what is working well, and of where modification or support is required. This level of rigorous evaluation has been at the heart of the school’s rapid development, and is well supported by the very good quality of professional relationships that the school has carefully built up. As a result, teachers know their part in achieving the

school's vision, and value feedback and support so that guidance is received positively and is therefore successful.

The principal's strategy of seeking the widest range of opportunities for professional development has been successful in developing a strongly reflective culture throughout the school. Through the introduction of the Core Knowledge program, for example, a strong emphasis was placed on identifying standards-based planning, informed by assessment information, and in establishing meaningful links between subjects. This, in turn, ensured that a good emphasis could also be placed on developing teachers' skills in planning for differentiation, and has led to rapid improvement in this aspect of the school's work. The administrative team meets frequently. Its members use data analysis and accurate evaluation of what is working well, and where improvement is required, to set the agenda for their discussions. As a result, regular grade meetings are informed by leaders' good understanding of data, which has been used to good effect in building teachers' understanding of the importance of regularly updated assessment.

The school has made good use of partnerships in supporting the curriculum and students' learning. The arts are a particular example of this with, for example, students having the opportunity, to develop their own skills and to exhibit in a gallery environment as "real artists".

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.

Systems for evaluating whole-school effectiveness are robust and are effective in helping leaders in tracking progress towards achieving change. They make very good use of this in, for example, planning professional development that is well focused on promoting desired changes, and in modifying developments according to the success that has been achieved. Changes to assessment practice in math, for example, followed the analysis of data that revealed that students were not being challenged at the level the school knew to be appropriate. The principal has communicated his vision with drive and clarity. Consequently, all members of the school community understand the direction of the school's development, and their part in what one teacher referred to as, "our journey". He made certain, for example, that good planning, evaluation and review ensured the smooth introduction of the Core Knowledge program, because of his determination to provide the widest possible breadth of experiences for students.

Throughout the school, confidence in the use of data has developed rapidly. Targets are set for student achievement and, through formal and informal means, such as interim assessments, are assiduously tracked. Except in reading, the school does not yet track progress from students' prior achievement, which means that the school cannot compare assessed potential with outcomes from start to end of year. Teachers and academic support staff make very good use of conference notes and of running records to ensure that students are making the required progress. They discuss students' records regularly and so are able to establish where students require extra help, and to provide this at an early stage. As a result, students at different levels of achievement make good progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Belle Harbor 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