



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Castlewood School

Elementary School 186

**72 Avenue
Queens
NY 11426**

Principal: Dolores Troy-Quinn

Dates of review: October 9 – 10, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Jo Cheadle-Maruta

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Castlewood School is an elementary school with 308 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 14% Black, 19% Hispanic, 30% White and 37% Asian students. The student body includes 1.8% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 97%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school shares its site with Public School 224, a District 75 school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides strong leadership and has a clear vision for the school's further development.
- The school collects a broad range of data about performance with a particularly sharp focus on the learning needs of special education students and students in greatest need of improvement.
- There is good collaboration amongst staff members who share goals and actions plans for improving student learning.
- Teachers feel responsibility towards, and are held accountable for the progress and learning of their students.
- Students engage fully in the well-planned and stimulating curriculum.
- There are equally effective procedures for developing students' social and personal qualities alongside their academic skills and knowledge.
- The school is well-organized and runs smoothly.
- There are good opportunities for teachers to improve their skills and knowledge through professional development and by sharing good practice with colleagues.
- There are strong relationships with parents who feel well informed and involved.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that there is consistent and continuous challenge provided for the school's highest achieving students.
- Continue to build teachers' confidence and skills in using data to direct their instruction for students of all achievement levels.
- Continue to develop the use of data relating to sub-groups to direct whole school goals for improvement.
- Ensure that all school improvement goals are always set within agreed timeframes and have measurable success criteria.
- Plan opportunities for regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of progress towards goals set for school improvement.

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.

Castlewood is a happy and purposeful school where emphasis is given in equal balance to students' social and personal development and academic progress. The principal and staff know individual students very well and encourage their progress in a caring and nurturing atmosphere. The school benefits greatly from the good partnership with Public School 224, a District 75 school that shares the same site. Students learn well together, teachers share their expertise to support a range of learning styles and there is a harmonious acceptance of the each other's needs. The principal has a clear vision of where the school has come from and where it is heading. She shares her vision clearly and passionately, encouraging a sense of team spirit to reach the goals set. Parents appreciate their involvement in the life of the school and are supportive of its work.

The school's inquiry team has begun its work by focusing on the progress made from one grade group to the next. There has been useful discussion relating to possible causes of dips in student performance. In particular, team members recognize the need to provide further challenge and motivation to higher achieving students to encourage steady rates of progress. The team is clear about the course of action it will take to analyze data in more detail and there have been suggestions about strategies that could improve progress. So far, the team has not established time scales and success criteria to enable close monitoring of the effectiveness of its work. Moreover, the schools goals for improvement, while clearly shared with all staff, are not set within clear time limits, nor are they rigorously and regularly monitored to show progress towards them.

The school has made good progress in addressing areas for improvement from the last Quality Review. There are now agreed procedures for collecting data and a good range is available, including extended data collection in math. Students know their monthly goals for overall learning in English language arts and math. They also have individual targets set by their teachers in conferencing sessions. Staff members are now more often using data to drive their instruction and the school's plans demonstrate that they will have further training opportunities to develop their analytical skills in the near future.

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 carefully considers and tracks the performance of special education students and students in greatest need of improvement. Useful data about the performance of these students directs strategies for teaching that encourage good learning. Staff

members know their students well and use consistent approaches to assess the progress they make in most subjects, including English language arts and math. Methods include regular formal assessments, end of unit assessments and ongoing teacher assessment. In general, however, the school does not make effective enough use of data pertaining to particular groups of students to develop a clear understanding of whether rates of progress are good enough for all. This is particularly the case for the school's highest achieving students who do not always receive the levels of challenge and stimulation they need to ensure continually good rates of progress. By comparing student gains across grade groups, the school recognizes where instruction must improve. Plans are in place to investigate teaching styles and curriculum content, and to make changes to improve student learning. Teachers have begun to make close analysis of the data available to them and there are plans to extend their skills in this aspect of their work through professional development. They recognize that this information is of great support in planning instruction. The principal has also begun to compare the school's performance with that of similar schools in the city, giving a further dimension to the planning and goal setting process.

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 is effective in using data relating to special education and lower achieving students. The data directs the organization of teaching groups and learning experiences that effectively match student needs. This practice has not yet extended to meet the needs of all other student groups. Members of the inquiry team are working to improve this situation and have identified student groups for whom expectations are not always as high as they could be and for whom rates of progress are not consistently good.

Members of staff see themselves as a cohesive community where students come first. As such, they share the goals for whole school development and take an active role in working towards them. Teachers are very aware of the individual responsibility they have in helping to create a successful school. They also clearly understand the role of parents in this process and invite their full participation. Parents appreciate this and value the principal and teachers who "believe in our children". The school maintains regular contact with parents, and parents are aware of long-term goals set for their children's learning. There are plans to use monthly information sheets sent out by each grade group to improve further the lines of communication with parents. Parents commented that the first grade prototype was impressive.

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.

A relevant and meaningful curriculum and wise use of resources successfully support student learning. An example of this is the school's good use of the Columbia University Teachers College program for English language arts. There are many opportunities for students to read for sustained periods and they are encouraged to think carefully about what they read. Parents feel that the school engenders a real love of reading in their

children. They were a little less convinced that there is consistently good instruction in spelling, but the school is now making effective use of a new phonics program to supplement the development of writing skills. While there is a good range of data about student performance, teachers do not always use this information to maximum effect in planning instruction that exactly matches students' needs.

Interesting and lively teaching by specialist teachers for subjects such as science and art inspires students. In art for example, students are very aware of the objectives set for them and what skills they will learn to achieve these objectives. They admire their teacher who can "draw a real, live hand!" They really enjoy their lessons and work with careful concentration. As a result, they produce high quality work that teachers celebrate in very attractive displays around the school. The wise use of financial and other resources enables these good learning opportunities. Enrichment activities draw on teachers' individual skills and interests and this encourages good learning for students.

All students at Castlewood behave very well. The school's nurturing atmosphere supports the development of good attitudes and respect for others. Students believe that they are caring towards one another. One girl who had been to a number of schools decided to stay at Castlewood because, "It was as if they had known me forever." Students respect and like their teachers. They say, "Teachers here really want you to learn, they don't want you to fail at tests." This positive learning atmosphere is one of the reasons for the school's high attendance rate.

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.

Through classroom observation and analysis of data, the school knows where it has weaknesses and makes plans to improve. Teachers are aware of their own developmental needs and which skills they will need to learn to have a positive impact on whole school plans for improvement. The principal carefully guides staff towards professional development that meets individual and whole school needs. Members of staff offer each other support and advice in an open and professional way. New teachers appreciate the guidance they receive from their colleagues, school coaches and the principal. Teachers learn well from each other and help each other to learn. A real strength of the school is the very successful partnership it has with the staff of PS 224. This partnership greatly enhances opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge for all teachers. The school functions in a well-organized way that enables a multitude of teaching and learning styles and various arrangements for instruction to function simultaneously.

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.

Appropriate development plans exist to support the principal's clear vision of how the school will be in the future. Through the increasingly frequent use of assessment data, a clearer understanding is emerging of ways to improve student progress. As a result, plans

are changing and evolving. To date not all plans have set timeframes for realization. Moreover, they do not have stringent criteria to measure how successful actions have been. The work of the inquiry team has highlighted the need to regularly and rigorously monitor and evaluate the implementation of action plans and the impact they have on student performance. This is a positive move to support effective school development and improve rates of progress for all students. The principal's clear vision for the future development of the school is well supported by the whole school community.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Castlewood School (PS186)	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 make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X	