



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Walter Ward School

Elementary- Middle 232

**153-23 83rd Street
Queens
NY 11414**

Principal: Lisa Josephson

Dates of review: January 23 - 24, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Richard Woolf

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well
What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review
Overall evaluation
How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Walter Ward is an elementary-middle school with 792 students from kindergarten through grade 7. The school population comprises 8.5% Black, 38% Hispanic, 40% White, and 13.5% Asian students. The student body includes 4.9% English language learners and 15% 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 93.3%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school is growing in numbers as it progresses to an all-through kindergarten to grade 8. The school's first full enrolment will be in September 2008 and planning is underway in order to make that accommodation.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- A charismatic, resourceful and forward-thinking principal leads the school very well.
- Strong and effective collaboration between administrators and staff promotes school improvement.
- The school provides students with an engaging and challenging curriculum to meet the school's learning objectives.
- The staff use data very well to provide differentiated instruction.
- The school runs a highly effective professional development program, challenging staff to keep abreast of current good practice.
- The school community continuously challenges itself to grow through the setting of high expectations.
- The students, staff and parents are all exceptionally respectful of each other.
- Student behavior and their attitude to learning are exemplary because the school's procedures are very well established and highly effective.
- The classrooms are vibrant places, conducive to learning.
- The parents are exceptionally proud and supportive of their school.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the performance of special education students by setting them more specific goals and monitoring their progress more rigorously.
- Develop strategies to engage more outside organizations to assist in meeting the school's goals.
- Seek ways to develop the school's technology infrastructure to increase parental involvement and co-operation.

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.

The principal is in her third year of leading the school. During this time, the school has made steady but significant progress despite adding extra grades in each of those years. Extensive use of data means the school sets challenging but realistic goals for the entire school community. However, the principal is aware for the need to set goals more rigorously for the special education students in order for them to reach their full potential. Increasing use of technology influences many areas of the school's work including classroom instruction and data analysis. This increases student engagement and improves their performance. Behavior of students is first class and relationships between adults and students exemplary. The combination of these two features provides the school with a positive tone, greatly assisting the students in their learning. The school's professional development program aids teachers in becoming better practitioners and they have a good understanding of current pedagogy. The school does not yet have extensive links with outside organizations. The principal acknowledges this and is seeking ways of remedying the situation.

Since the last Quality Review, the school has made good progress in the areas for development. There are improvements in tracking individual student's progress, especially English language learners. Parents feel communications with school are better and improving with each passing semester. The inquiry team is fully functional. Each week the progress of two students from the target group is the focus of a detailed analysis.

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 now makes better use of data than previously in understanding the needs of its students. The principal and her assistant principal analyze data from a broad array of sources, including in-house generated data, and disseminate this analysis to the staff. With growing confidence, the staff use it to inform their teaching. Teachers' record keeping is very good and they have an in-depth knowledge of their student's progress throughout the year. The sharing of this data with the administration allows them to

track student progress across all grade levels and to compare performance class by class.

The school collects and analyzes a wide range of data about the performance of English language learners which enables staff to set well-defined targets at the right level of challenge. By this careful analysis, the school demonstrates significant progress for this group of students. The school does not use the same rigorous systems when looking at special education students. The principal acknowledges this and although improvements are taking place, there is still much to achieve. The school analyzes student performance by gender and ethnicity and has found that results overall show little difference across the core subjects. Over the last three years, as a result of her analysis, the principal has developed an in-depth knowledge of the performance of both staff and students. This is a growing strength as the school's ability to track individual and cohort progress increases year on year. By making comparisons with similar schools, the principal analyzes their strengths and then visits them with the view of using their expertise to strengthen her own school.

With the Acuity data system now online the staff have another tool to assist them with the development of their students. Training for all staff has enabled them to use Acuity within their classes with increasing confidence. Students also use the system, enabling them to chart their own individual progress.

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

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

The Comprehensive Education Plan is a critical document in the school's development. Staff and parents, as members of the senior leadership team who devise this document, play a vital role in the decision making process. Data clearly drives the school's goals with individual cohorts and teachers being set specific yearly targets. The development of benchmarking for checking overall progress is of particular importance and has been noteworthy in moving students through their individual progress levels.

English language learners are set clear and challenging targets which have ensured their progress over the school year. The numbers of them who meet or surpass the set targets is impressive. The principal realizes the school does not yet challenge special education students with the same rigor, although there has been improvement in this area of work over the last year. The school operates the citywide gifted and talented program, from kindergarten through to grade 5. The students receive challenging goals and the school benefits through improved outcomes in external examinations. Expansion of this challenge continues into the upper grades in the form of an advanced Regents class. This example shows that the school considers that setting high targets is of paramount importance in ensuring that students realize their potential.

There are very effective systems in place to ensure the school goals and mission statement are widely shared, especially as the school enrolls more students. Regular school assemblies and the use of bulletin boards convey to students the high expectations the school has of them. Parents and teachers meet regularly with particularly high attendance rates for the formal parent teacher conferences. There are

strong partnerships between home and school. The school provides very good encouragement for parents to be open and share information about their children. However, the principal acknowledges that the school does not make enough use of technology, for example, to develop communication through the school website.

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.

In delivering the curriculum, the school adopts a balanced literacy approach with a strong emphasis on developing reading and writing skills throughout the entire school. From careful scrutiny of State subject standards, the school’s pacing calendars and curriculum maps are developed. Teachers use these to inform their instruction, plan lessons carefully, and teach in an exciting and engaging manner. The staff clearly understand their students’ individual strengths and weakness. As a result, they differentiate their teaching to accommodate the students’ needs. Teachers’ records, including the rationale of why certain students work in particular groups, are testimony to their excellent knowledge of students. The hiring of additional teachers to reduce class size or add extra support has also supported the school in the further development of differentiation.

The school broadens the core curriculum by the addition of science, social studies, art, and music for all its students. The decision to infuse technology into the curriculum is proving most beneficial. Staff and students are learning together to test the capabilities of themselves and the technology. The outcome motivates staff and students and is improving student engagement in their lessons. The classrooms are vibrant and conducive to learning. Assessment of work is up to date and provides students with next-step learning objectives. The tone of the school is very positive and students respect not only their teachers but also each other. This is evident throughout the entire building, where there is a really positive atmosphere that is conducive to learning. There are very good systems in place to ensure attendance rates remain high and continue to improve. The principal is a first class resource manager and because of this, the school continues to grow academically as well as physically.

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.

While the principal and assistant principal carry out formal observations, the school’s greatest benefit comes from informal observations. These occur on a daily basis providing staff with positive feedback on their teaching. The staff appreciate that this process improves their instruction and thereby their students’ learning. The observations give the school up-to-the-minute information for its professional development program, ensuring that it meets the needs of individual teachers as well as the whole school. The school’s focus on classroom questioning techniques is a good example of the successful implementation of the program. Intervisitation is being used

effectively to introduce staff to the use of technology as an integral part of lessons. The staff are supportive of each other and work collaboratively together. Meeting weekly in grade level teams, teachers are able to discuss not only instructional matters but concerns relating to individual students. The staff also makes very effective use of data in these meetings to highlight individual student and whole class strengths and needs.

New teachers to the school receive a high level of academic and personal support. A mentor establishes the school's "rules and rituals" with them. The math and literacy coaches provide academic support. The guidance team have responded very well to new demands of the growing school, ensuring that they are available to students and parents while maintaining their regular formal meetings to discuss student needs. The school encourages parents to participate actively in school life with the parent coordinator playing a significant role. The sense of community and collaboration between staff, parents and students help make the school happy and lively. Student behavior is exemplary and of this is evident throughout the whole school. The students welcome the opportunities the school gives them to act responsibly in such activities as the peer-mentoring program and the student council.

In recognition of the changing demands of a growing school, the principal is rightly seeking to improve and extend links with a wider and more varied group of outside organizations.

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.

A growing strength of the school is its ability to monitor and revise targets and goals. For example, at the start of the year teachers receive specific reading targets for their students. At certain points during the year, they have to demonstrate to the administration progress towards achieving those targets. The setting of benchmarks is proving crucial because it enables immediate revision of targets for both staff and students. Data shows this process to be highly effective in raising overall standards and improving reading levels. The principal acknowledges that the school's procedures for monitoring the performance of the special education students are insufficiently rigorous..

The school is using the new Acuity system to great effect. Staff make good use of it as a diagnostic tool to assess the effectiveness of their teaching and, as a result, student learning. The new system also gives students the opportunity to test themselves which is productive and challenging to them. The increasing and better use of Acuity's interim hard data complements the soft data in portfolios and conference binders and enables staff to assess the effectiveness of their teaching.

This is a reflective school which carefully analyzes its planning procedures before setting new goals and targets. This is of particular importance as the school continues to grow. An example of this is the establishment of, and planning, for advanced Regents classes as the school prepares to enroll its first grade 8 cohort. The principal is very clear in her vision for the school and the progress it needs to make over the next three years for that vision to become a reality.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Walter Ward 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