



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Public School 233

Elementary - High School 233

**109- 36 204th Street
Queens
NY 11412**

Principal: Debbie Edmonds

Dates of review: March 10 - 11, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Louise Kapner

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 233 is an elementary-high school with 372 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 41% Black, 30% Hispanic, 14% White, and 14% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 63% of the students enrolled and girls account for 37%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 85.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility.

PS 233 is a whole year school for students with severe multiple disabilities, those on the autism spectrum, and others with emotional deficits. There are 40 classes shared across seven sites. Students attend in self-contained settings or inclusion classes and are integrated into mainstream classes with the support of paraprofessionals. The vast majority of students are eligible for the New York State Alternate Assessments.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and her administrative team work in a highly collaborative manner to create a nurturing environment where very fragile students meet with success.
- Newly implemented and uniform data collection systems are highly focused on identifying individual student's needs and monitoring their progress to mastery.
- The school selects and modifies its curriculum and supplemental materials to meet the academic needs of its students.
- Students are actively involved in suitable tasks and know what is expected of them.
- Staff work together as a cohesive team focused on meeting the needs of the students.
- The school, although on many different sites, works as one unit sharing ideas and best practices.
- Well-differentiated professional development is used effectively to enhance teachers' skills.
- Parents are unanimous in recognizing the school as a caring environment with suitable learning expectations.
- Extremely effective partnerships support students with opportunities to participate in many varied activities.
- The school is highly self-reflective and continually looks to revise practices to develop academic and social skills of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Broaden the curriculum by building on the arts program and explore ways to expand music enrichment activities onto all sites.
- Review the data collection of students' trial results to identify successful teaching strategies and materials and to plan next steps.
- Develop suitable tools for the transitional coach to use to help parents compare transitional sites for aging-out students.

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.

Public School 233 provides a highly suitable, very nurturing, instructional program for extremely fragile students. The principal and administrators work in a very collaborative manner to set goals resulting in a school, that although on seven distinct sites, works as one cohesive unit focused on recognizing and effectively meeting the needs of each student. Teachers, specialists, and paraprofessionals work untiringly to set highly individualized goals and design and use varied curriculum strategies and materials to help each student reach their own potential. One student, when asked how he did on a task, replied with the word “mastery”. Students are engaged in many different activities to support learning. However, regularly scheduled music programs are not available at all sites.

Newly developed data collection systems enable staff to collect daily and weekly data on students’ mastery in meeting interim- and long-term objectives. Presently, staff do not review this information to identify those strategies that are most effective in leading to students’ mastery, and which can be subsequently shared as models of successful teaching practices. Collection of relevant school data enables administrators to compare year-to-year growth in areas of concern such as attendance, parent participation, and results in the State assessments. The inquiry team is well underway and is focused on supporting identified students to gain greater receptive and expressive language skills. Members meet regularly to review student progress and revise goals and strategies.

All staff participate in well-differentiated professional development opportunities enabling them to learn best practices. The school has numerous effective partnerships that provide students with opportunities to grow academically and socially. Parents are extremely grateful for the safe, caring, and enriching environment with which their children are served. A transitional coordinator works closely with parents of older students helping to plan next steps. Presently, however, effective tools are not in place to enable parents to compare future placement opportunities for their children. The areas identified in the prior year’s Quality Review have been effectively tackled. The school regularly self-reflects on its progress from year-to-year, and during the year, enabling it to revise and develop future plans.

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 collection and use of data to identify students' needs is at a very high level. The school has developed a very effective and uniform data system enabling staff at all sites to record and monitor students' daily and weekly progress towards mastery of individual education plan goals and objectives. This data, supported well by reviewing standardized assessments and school-generated information, is effectively used to track the progress and performance for all students, and to plan next steps. Specialists and related service providers record relevant data to guide instruction and to help set suitable goals for students. Staff maintains comprehensive individual student portfolios enabling them to have ongoing comparisons of students' work. The school makes excellent use of photographs to "capture a true picture of student achievement". All data follows students annually, enabling staff to continually monitor students' performance and progress.

The school regularly reviews a very good range of data to look at whole school progress, by subgroups, and by individuals. Classes are largely non-graded and students are grouped by age. The principal compares the school's growth in key areas such as attendance, job-site and inclusion program participation, and results on State assessments. Over the past two years the number of students in inclusion and at work-sites showed a significant increase. As it is difficult to identify a peer group due to the uniqueness of the school's demographics the school finds that comparisons of progress are not easy to make. The principal effectively works with a network of other similar establishments to qualitatively compare best practices and share ideas. Reviewing student attendance relative to other District 75 schools shows that this school's attendance level is 5% higher.

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.

Staff members from all sites, and the school leadership team, collaboratively develop the school's Comprehensive Education Plan. They review the prior year's document relative to the progress they have made towards achieving their goals. Using a needs assessment record, and carefully reviewing school data, the principal revises and sets suitable interim- and long-term goals for the school. Teams of teachers, specialists and service providers at each site work together well. They use school goals to develop class and individual goals that are developmentally suitable for the needs of their students. To promote students' learning, goals are continually revisited, and revised to reflect mastery aims. The school focuses on providing each student with appropriate support to reach their potential. Academic intervention services enable high school students to work with suitable instructional materials to increase their reading ability. Students in inclusion programs receive relevant tutoring services. The school's data inquiry team is working with staff to increase receptive and expressive language skills for a cohort of 14 students. The team has set highly specific individual goals and regularly collects data to monitor students' performance and progress. Appropriate adjustments to goals and data collection are implemented as needed.

Students know what is expected of them. One young man proudly knew he had achieved the correct response when his teacher showed him his color-coded data sheet. Parents are considered by the school to be important partners. They receive daily communication about their child's progress. Parents use this system to share information from home. Individual education plan conferences and report cards convey clear and specific students' goals to parents. A parent appreciatively shared information that his son's attention span has "increased from two to ten seconds", attaining the goal set for him. The school

provides excellent information to help parents support their child at home. A student's first trip on an airplane was successfully achieved as a result of a picture exchange communication book created by the teacher and used by the parent.

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 holds itself and each staff member highly accountable to meet the needs of its population. The school's curriculum utilizes best practices from a variety of programs. Staff create a nurturing environment to support student learning. "Respectful materials" of high-interest and low-vocabulary engage students in reading. The *Mayer Johnson* picture symbols and a wide-range of augmentative devices are used at a very high level in all of the school's sites enabling even the most non-verbal student to respond, feel respected and well supported. Verbal praise is widely practiced and happily received by students.

Teachers use each student's individual education plan very effectively to set long-term goals and short-term objectives. Instruction is interesting, sensory-based, and successfully differentiated to actively engaging students in learning. This year each class selected a project to infuse the "think green" theme. High school students are using the sewing machine to create a quilt with recycled material. Detailed data collection monitors students' performance and progress and informs suitable modifications to goals.

The school continually seeks new programs to support their efforts to improve student outcomes. "Attainment", a literacy skill building program for non-verbal students is effectively implemented in an early-grade class to help students learn to identify words and letters. Arts enrichment is well integrated into the curriculum to support learning and develop social skills. Students enjoy music and participate in musical productions. High school students are presently auditioning for parts in "The Wiz". One staff member shared that music "feeds the soul" of the students. However, not all sites have staff to support a full music program. Data and teacher input is effectively used in the decision making of budgeting, staffing and scheduling. Staff movement from site-to-site is effected as necessary to best match teacher's skills to student needs. The crisis intervention teacher visits all sites, designing interventions to help behaviorally challenged students meet with success. Attendance is regularly monitored and absences are rigorously followed up. Although the school's students have many medical needs, student attendance is above District 75's average.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

The principal and assistant principals are effective leaders. They work as a cohesive team, draw upon each other's expertise, and manage the school very effectively. School procedures are clearly articulated to staff via a school handbook, site-specific daily information, and email. The school places a significant emphasis on suitable instruction. Administrators use the formal observation process to ensure classroom teaching is clearly aligned with students' individual education plan goals. Teachers appreciate the detailed feedback noting each staff member's interaction, and materials and activities used with students. Site-based administrators visit classrooms frequently and praise staff for good

practice. Staff members observe each other's classrooms, and visits to other schools enable teachers to see good practices. A school-based "Best Practice Fair" highlights student work. Information gained from classroom visits, and via teacher surveys, is used effectively to guide decisions for professional development. Staff members have many opportunities to attend on- and off-site sessions to enhance their skills. Vendors provide ample support for teachers and paraprofessionals for new programs. To implement the "Starr Reporter" curriculum staff received in-class and on-line help. New teachers receive a high level of assistance. One new teacher praised the support for "review of lessons and collecting data appropriate to students".

Student support providers attend to students' needs well. Behavior of students is carefully monitored. Individual student contracts support "student ownership over behavior". As a result of their "Power of Choice" program there are fewer incidents. The transitional coordinator meets with parents of aging out students to plan next steps. She arranges visits to programs for which students are eligible. However, the school does not have a formal tool to use when comparing programs to help parents select the most suitable transitional site for their child. Highly varied and effective partnerships support the school's goals. Organizations such as Marshalls and Zinnias provide older students with on-site job training and plan to hire one of the students.

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.

The principal and her administrative team meet regularly to evaluate school practices and monitor progress towards achieving interim- and long-term goals. The driving force behind instruction is a detailed data collection system of student work and results of assessments. It enables staff to effectively monitor students' performance and progress towards meeting long-term objectives and short-term goals as noted on their individual education plan. To ensure that student's goals are realistic, short-term goals undergo careful review and are updated frequently to reflect mastery. Administrators monitor daily routines and observe instruction determining that it is suitable to students' needs and improving student outcomes. Modifications to academic services are implemented as appropriate.

School leaders are not complacent. They continually look at best practices to identify strategies to support the future development of the school. This year's data collection system is highly successful in helping to inform instruction and monitor student growth. However, the school does not review the data relative to students' performance on different tasks to identify successful strategies that can be used to guide instruction school-wide. The administrators see this as a next step. To support data collection the school plans to use video cameras to "show parents real evidence of students' achievement". The school is expanding their capacity to meet each student's need by infusing technology into each classroom to help students develop greater receptive and expressive language. Touch-screen computers are being introduced across the sites.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 233	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