



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Public School 255

Elementary-High School 255

**158-40 76th Road
Queens
NY 11366**

Principal: Richard Marowitz

Dates of review: November 13 - 14, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Louise Kapner

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 255 is an elementary-high school with 335 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 15% Black, 31% Hispanic, 31% White, and 23% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 82% of the students enrolled and girls account for 18%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.5%.

PS 255 is a 12 month school that educates students with autism. There are 57 classes housed in eight sites. Students attend in non-graded self-contained settings and 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 Assessment. The school is a self-management school within District 75.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal manages the school extremely well with his assistant principals, all of whom focus on providing students with a positive school experience.
- The school uses a wide-range of assessments to identify each student's needs.
- Students' instructional and behavioral goals are highly individualized to improve student outcomes.
- The school is exceptionally committed to providing a rigorous nurturing classroom program that encourages independence for fragile students.
- Teachers are held to a high level of accountability to ensure teaching meets the needs of every student.
- The school is highly self-reflective and continually looks to revise practices to provide relevant academic and social instruction.
- Professional development is differentiated and used well to enhance teachers' skills.
- Parents are very knowledgeable of the school's programs and are provided with many opportunities to provide useful information to the school about their children.
- Classroom instruction is highly differentiated and engaging, and students have opportunities to participate in arts education.
- Highly effective partnerships provide students with many opportunities to grow academically and socially.

What the school needs to improve

- Disaggregate data by ethnic groups to compare student performance and progress.
- Promote the use of teachers' written responses to students' work to convey clear expectations.

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.

PS 255 is a highly successful special education school for autistic students. The principal, along with his very capable assistant principals and dedicated staff, work in an exceedingly collaborative manner to ensure they meet the needs of fragile students. A wide-range of assessments provides staff with a wealth of relevant cognitive and behavioral information that is used well to set individual students' goals. At this time, the school does not disaggregate data by ethnic groups. Staff are very knowledgeable about best practices and are constantly honing their skills to ensure good teaching. Students are actively engaged in learning and instruction is very well matched to each one's needs. Teachers' comments on student work provide guidance, however, this is not consistent on all student work displayed throughout the school.

Each area noted for improvement during the 2006-2007 quality review has been addressed very effectively. A school-generated timeline provides staff with firm deadlines for completing assessments and the individual education plan. A revamped school schedule now gives teachers additional time each day to accomplish this task. The inquiry team is well underway. The members have identified a group of students and targeted behaviors for investigation and modification. The nurturing school environment is very welcoming to parents and students. The administrators are in no way complacent, school practice is under constant review, and suitable changes are initiated as needed to improve student outcomes.

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 is at a very high level. The administration of commercial and school-designed tools is well matched to each student's need. The extensive wide range of assessments addresses the cognitive and behavioral needs of students, enabling staff to compile comprehensive individual well-rounded profiles, and supports the generation of suitable individual education plan goals. This sophisticated data collection begins in September and is regularly updated allowing for constant monitoring of student performance and progress. Unique to this population the school's use of a 'reinforcer inventory' allows staff to identify and motivate each student to attend to task. As an outgrowth of last year's quality review, a newly formed committee developed a timeline

and a comprehensive list of assessments. Teachers use this information effectively to create a 'kit' of materials to implement the assessment protocols.

The majority of students participate in the New York State Alternate Assessment. Results for those students participating in standardized tests are carefully reviewed, as is all assessment data for English language learners and by gender. Classroom teachers and service providers effectively use all data to guide instruction and monitor student performance and progress. Presently the school does not disaggregate data by ethnic group.

Individual student performance is under constant review. Comparisons to prior years' performance are at a very high level. Articulation sheets enable teachers to share information year-to-year and detailed assessment binders follow students throughout their school career. While comparisons of student performance by class and grade are not appropriate to this setting, the principal carefully compares classroom instruction and environment to ensure all students' needs are being addressed. The principal is highly aware of his school's performance. He has strong and extremely effective ties to a similar special education school in the Bronx that he uses as a barometer to measure his progress. His review includes looking at structures, programs and assessments.

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 school uses data in a variety of ways to address behavioral and academic needs of students. The wealth of data culled from completed assessments helps teachers to write highly individualized measurable goals specific to each student. Parents support this process by completing a needs' assessment that includes what they would like to happen for their child. Goals are continually revisited and updated to reflect mastery, and revised as suitable to promote students' learning.

Staff at all of the school's sites work in a highly collaborative manner. Teams of teachers, service providers, specialists, paraprofessionals, and administrators work in and out of classrooms to focus on improving student outcomes. The collegial review process, part of the New York State alternate assessment, enables groups of teachers to focus on instructional needs and choose suitable tasks that are aligned with state standards to evaluate students' performance. The school's behavior support team develops and modifies individual plans to address challenging behaviors to ensure each student attends to learning. Eligible students receive academic intervention services during the day. Individual plans address needs, and performance and progress is regularly monitored.

The entire school community is passionate about providing students with the tools to become independent adults. School goals are openly articulated to all teachers, and each site shares the same vision. Expectations are clearly communicated to students and parents. Each student has a daily schedule designed to convey the day's plan. Both this schedule and a student specific behavior plan are displayed, thus enabling staff to know students' routines at a glance. Teachers' comments convey responses to displayed student work. However, this is not consistent at each unit or from site-to-site. A daily communication log keeps parents in the loop. Parents use this system to share information from home. Individual education plan goals and a newly designed report card convey clear and specific students' goals to parents. An abundance of parent workshops

provides valuable information relevant for parents of autistic students. Parents learn how to support instructional and behavioral goals at home. To transition from one activity to another, a parent shared how she uses the picture exchange communication system to decrease the anxiety of her child at home.

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’s curriculum utilizes best practices from a variety of programs. In all cases classroom instruction and environment is well matched to students’ needs. Mayer Johnson picture symbols are used exceedingly well throughout the school. The picture exchange communication system is a highly effective communication system used with and by non-verbal students. The use of the ‘Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-Handicapped Children’ (TEACCH) methodology creates classrooms that support smooth transitions and clear expectations to all students. Workstations encourage students working independently. Teachers design and differentiate instruction for each student using assessment data very well. Data from applied behavioral analysis is highly specific and regularly collected to follow each student’s mastery of skills and to match instruction. Student data culled from ‘Edmark’, a computer-based reading program, enables teacher to identify students’ skills and address areas of deficits. Assistive technology encourages non-verbal students to be active participants in learning. A well-rounded arts education program enhances learning for all students. A group of students was highly engaged in creating sand paintings. Some students worked independently, while others received appropriate support. Last year, student work was proudly displayed at Rockefeller University. This year, art teachers from all sites collaboratively planned and implemented an ‘Artist of the Month’ theme.

Teachers are held highly accountable. Classrooms are safe environments that convey high expectations with good teaching. All assessments and student goals are completed in a timely manner to ensure students receive suitable instruction. The administration closely monitors this process and, by revising the school schedule, has given teachers adequate time to complete this task. The principal’s view is that he “wants it done right.”

Student attendance is afforded a high priority. Each site’s nurse calls home at once if a child is absent. Parents are contacted should a student come to school with a bruise, or even the slightest cut. The well-being of each student is of great concern .

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.

Administrators use the formal observation process to ensure classroom instruction is clearly aligned with students’ individual education plan goals. Room environments reflect high expectations with opportunities afforded for students to work in small groups and independently at workstations. Site-based administrators visit classrooms frequently each day. Comprehensive learning walks can include the principal, coach and site coordinators.

Teachers appreciate constructive feedback and, as one staff member shared, she always “walks away with something”.

Professional development opportunities are extensive and staff are strongly encouraged to participate in Department of Education training and to seek out areas of interest. This year, supported by funds donated by the parents, new teachers are attending TEACCH seminars. The revised school schedule provides ample meeting time for teachers, who are supportive of each other and work in a highly collaborative manner. Classroom intervisitations occur within and across sites. The principal is keenly aware when a staff member can profit from seeing a colleague implementing a best practice. Fifteen new teachers and their mentors meet at least once each week. Non-certified teachers meet twice weekly and document their outcomes through an online reporting system. The principal shared that staff changes may occur to “support professional growth”. The high school teacher, who during our staff meeting spoke very highly of the school and his commitment to the students, was formerly in an elementary teaching position. Guidance counselors play a major role in the school. They facilitate ongoing meetings with parents and are highly attentive to students. Therapists’ programs are reflective of students’ educational needs. Extremely effective partnerships support the school’s goals. Arts Horizon provides students with excellent enrichment in arts education. Students participate in overnight camping through the Gateway program. Teachers and parents participate in learning seminars at the Birch School.

The school is very well managed. School-wide procedures are clearly articulated. Faculty and grade conferences are held monthly at each site. Staff know the “go-to” person. Meetings of the entire staff occur when feasible.

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 school’s Comprehensive Education Plan is reflective of all sites and used to identify goals included in the principal’s performance review. The principal, along with his cabinet and school leadership team, whose members are inclusive of all constituents and sites, meet regularly to evaluate school practice and plan for the future. Measurable short- and long-term goals are set for students, whose performance is regularly reviewed. Data culled from assessments documents progress. Administrators regularly meet with staff, visit classrooms, and review student work and individual education plans. They hold teachers accountable for good instruction and implementing modifications to academic services when suitable. School-wide data, some collected daily, is carefully recorded and used as a benchmark to monitor teachers’ successes with students.

The school is not complacent. The principal is proud that the school is “constantly changing the way we do business” to foster independence and help students’ reach their potential. School outcomes are very effectively used to identify and implement relevant instructional programs. This year ‘Foundations’ is providing a structured approach for the teaching of phonics. New teaching strategies and suitable materials are continually introduced to support improving student outcomes. Staff members are active participants in various committees, engage in meaningful conversations, and have input into creating change. This year’s assessment protocols are an outgrowth of last year’s focus group. The teachers from all sites will reconvene in January to review progress and plan next steps.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 255	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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	