



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**51 Avenue Academy**

**Elementary School 877**

**76- 05 51st Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11373**

**Principal: Digna Erstejn**

**Dates of review: April 14 - 15, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Ronnie Solow**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

51 Avenue Academy is an elementary school with 456 students in grades 4 and 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 49% Hispanic, 2% White, and 46% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 200 -2007 was 97%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 75% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is a skilled educator who communicates a vision of collaborative leadership and effective instruction.
- The school uses a wide range of data to determine the learning needs and evaluate the progress of students.
- Teachers' good use of assessment enables them to provide challenging and differentiated activities in the classrooms.
- Data is closely analyzed to develop the next steps for improvement planning and revisions of action plans.
- Individual and small groups of students receive effective instruction through various intervention services.
- The core curriculum plans include measurable outcomes and timeframes serving to increase academic achievement.
- A wide range of art, music and dance classes support the academic program and provide excellent opportunities for self-expression.
- Professional development is differentiated and results in teacher growth and skill development.
- The school provides a nurturing environment that supports student learning, mutual trust and respect.
- Excellent attendance and lateness procedures are in place and result in very high rates of attendance.

### What the school needs to improve

- Disaggregate data to monitor the performance and progress of ethnic groups and to assess cultural sensitivity in the school.
- Ensure that high expectations, whole school goals and important information are consistently shared with the school community.
- Share interim and predictive testing information with parents to inform them of their children's learning goals and progress.
- Expand current efforts to develop additional relationships with outside partners to support the academic and personal growth of the 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.**

The principal and teams of teachers work to ensure that their students receive a high quality education that meets their individual needs. The various collaborative teams strategize, implement, and revise instructional activities based on a wide range of data, classroom assessment information, running records and student conferences. Teachers are adept at using data to inform and revise their classroom practices, effectively meeting student-learning needs. Data is tracked for progress of gender groups, English language learners and special education students. The school does not track the progress of ethnic groups, which limits its ability to assess the cultural sensitivity of the academic program.

The use of computer-based assessments enables the teachers to gain good additional knowledge of the performance of the students. The inquiry team provides high quality in-house training and support for the teachers in the use of data-driven instruction. Through useful training, teachers understand how to use assessment tools to pinpoint areas of need. Other professional development, based on skill, need and interest, effectively supports the acquisition of new teaching skills.

A wide range of art, music and dance classes effectively enriches the academic program and provides opportunities for creativity and self-expression. Additional efforts are underway to develop partnerships that support the academic and social development of the students. Parents are welcomed into the school and invited to many meetings and celebrations. The school does not do enough to ensure that all parents are informed of educational goals for their children.

The school has made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement from the last Quality Review. A skills program addresses the development of academic and scientific vocabulary, especially for English language learners and special education students. The Department of Education upgraded and repaired the internet capacity of the school so that it is now a reliable, user-friendly system. The inquiry team is studying 30 students who placed in the lowest third of the school on the State English language arts exam. The students receive intensive intervention services during and after school. Early results indicate some positive progress.

## **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 principal and teachers use a variety of formative and summative data to understand the progress of each student, class, and the two grades in the school. The school closely tracks the data from State assessments, including the 3rd grade results of their students, to create a good longitudinal growth picture of the school over several years. Effective analysis of data by gender, for special education students and English language learners, provides an accurate assessment of progress and determination of student strengths and weaknesses. The school does not disaggregate data for ethnic groups, thereby limiting its ability for assessing progress, educational needs and the cultural sensitivity of the school. Gathered data serves as the basis for the formation of flexible, needs-based instructional groups, in all subject areas, that serve the students well. Special education and English language learners receive effective targeted services, based on data analysis, in integrated and pullout instructional models of service.

The principal meets individually with every teacher each time new data comes into the school. She discusses with teachers the outcomes and implications for teaching and learning in the teacher's class. Analysis of the information results in determination of trends, needs in the class, and results in raised student performance outcomes. The principal makes good comparisons with schools in her peer horizon, neighboring schools and other schools in her network. Examination of scores informs her good decision making process and indicates that the school is making 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 proficient.**

Collaborative planning and goal setting activities assist the teacher teams and the principal with school improvement planning. Common planning periods for grade teams and professional development activities effectively assist the teachers in developing appropriate, high quality lessons and materials for their classes. School-based coaches and consultants collaborate with the teachers in creating activities that align to the well-defined curriculum maps and pacing calendars. Students identified as being at risk of failure receive targeted interventions services in integrated models of service. These are further supported through after school, Saturday and other safety net programs. A well-delineated spreadsheet, maintained for each class, indicates all services a student receives along with a personal data set. All intervention services, monitored weekly by the principal and academic intervention team, target the needs of the student through revisions and needs specific planning. Higher achieving students receive additional opportunities that challenge and enrich their education in class and after school, and prevent slippage to lower levels of performance.

The goal setting process, well embedded into the culture of the school, serves to highlight needed learning steps. Regularly scheduled meetings and other formal channels, such as report cards and parent association meetings, keep parents informed. However, at this time, the school's ability to share its high expectations, goals and other important information with parents is not fully developed. The school does not yet have, for example, a parent handbook, in appropriate languages, nor does it share interim and predictive test results with parents to keep them well informed about the school's goals, and the learning goals and progress of their children. This, in turn, results in less parental participation than desired.

**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 broad, engaging curriculum follows required City and State guidelines. Balanced literacy, using leveled libraries, supplemented by commercial programs, effectively supports literacy learning and provides good data about student progress towards achievement of learning goals. Everyday Math also provides high quality instructional strategies and useful data for teachers regarding progress in math. Classroom information, supported by the data from predictive and interim tests, carefully aligns the lessons to the curriculum maps and pacing calendars. The study of science, social studies, technology, physical education and health classes round out the core curriculum and effectively utilize best teaching practices. Art, music and dance classes support the academic curriculum and provide many opportunities for creativity and self-expression. Halls and classrooms, beautifully decorated with student work samples, exhibit the impact of high expectations and the broad, motivating curriculum. Classroom lessons engage students in challenging, differentiated work in need based instructional groups.

Budget, staffing and hiring decisions effectively address student needs. Additional teaching staff enable reductions in class size ratios, providing more teacher-student contact time. Academic intervention services, provided in class, ensure that served students participate in the full range of the classroom experience. This has proved especially effective for students requiring many interventions. Very good levels of mutual trust and respect between all members of the school community are publicized through the clear expectations of the school. Students serve as safety patrol monitors, color guard and on the nutrition council. Each morning, after opening exercises, the school recites a student-created pledge. Excellent systems record and track attendance and lateness. The rate of attendance is 97% for the year to date.

**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 instruction development team meets with the principal on a regular basis for developing the professional development action plan. The principal, coaches and

mentor teachers visit classes daily, observing the teaching and learning process. They provide high quality feedback to the teachers. Student data information serves as the basis for setting professional development activities that impact positively on student performance. Teachers regularly visit one another's classes, providing collegial suggestions and assistance, resulting in the sharing and development of best practices. An insightful survey, used to discern staff interest and needs, together with information gathered through formal and informal observation practices, are the basis for the differentiated professional development activities. New teachers meet daily with their mentors and effectively address their individual needs. Senior staff members willingly share their expertise and skills with less experienced colleagues, thereby extending the leadership capacity of the school. Consultants provide additional skill development activities in literacy and math best practices. Recognition of the importance of professional development is highlighted by the principal's practice of supporting staff to attend conferences and seminars outside of the school and turnkey the information upon return. Common planning time and lunchtime meetings provide effective opportunities for informal sharing of data, self-evaluation and reflection on instructional strategies. The school, currently with a limited number of external partners, is seeking the engagement of additional outside partnerships in support of the academic, social and emotional development 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 Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal's goals and objectives contain measurable goals with a timetable for checking progress. The principal, working in conjunction with staff members, regularly checks formal and informal data sources, information from the academic intervention team and attendance. These checks determine the need for revisions and change in the school plans. The good systems that are in place for monitoring success and evaluating progress towards the goals in the action plans result in collaborative planning and effective staff buy-in. Some teachers elect to move from grade 4 to grade 5 with their class. This practice provides the teachers with greater knowledge of their students and allows for swift adaptations and modifications to class plans based on their intimate knowledge of student needs.

The principal, in cooperation with a wide array of staff members, collaborate effectively on goal setting and revision processes. Close scrutiny of data from class, grade and subject area, provides the evidence regarding progress towards goal attainment. Revisions, swiftly enacted when the data illustrates the need for correction, align with the curriculum maps and pacing calendars. June planning serves as an opportunity for teachers' examination of yearly outcomes, reflection on discerned needs and use of the information for planning for the coming year. June planning results in teachers' knowledge of their needs for the coming year.

The principal and school community has a clear vision for the school and its students. They envision the students "becoming well rounded citizens and life-long learners through a rich cultural experience in academic subjects and the arts" with all working to accomplish this end.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: 51st Avenue Academy</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				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 student's 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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				X	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				X	

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>