



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Public School 17

Elementary-Middle School 017

**778 Forest Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Robin Cohen

Dates of review: February 11 - 12, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Helen Donnellan

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 17 is an elementary-middle school with 334 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 39% Black, 56% Hispanic, 3% White, 1% American Indian and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 85% of the students enrolled and girls account for 15%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 83.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 79% eligibility.

The school is a district 75 cluster of five sites located in South Bronx. Visits to the main site and the school site at Public School 43 were made during this Quality Review. Students are taught in the following student to teacher to paraprofessional ratios, 12:1:1; 8:1:1 and 6:1:1. Education is provided for students with emotional challenges, learning disabilities and autistic students. An all-year round program is offered to all students.

The school provides education for students on standardized and alternate assessment.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and her administrative team have a clear vision and commitment to raise the standard of instruction at all sites.
- Data is gathered and analyzed routinely on all students and makes clear their progress and performance.
- The principal interrogates data with rigor and in great depth to gain understanding of strengths and areas of under-performance.
- Data is used extensively to identify focused and effective strategies to support individual students so they can make increased rates of progress.
- Learning goals match the needs of students and data is systematically used to monitor progress and review actions to achieve these goals.
- The staff makes extensive use of technology to deliver the curriculum in ways that match the diverse needs of students.
- There are clear expectations for good behavior and discipline codes allow the school to provide a safe and orderly environment for students.
- Extensive classroom observations support teachers in developing their professional expertise.
- New teachers are well supported through extended programs of mentoring which enable them to apply the school's systems for instruction.
- There is extensive collaborative work between staff and related service providers that supports the delivery of unified services for students.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that school priorities are clearly defined and communicated to show interim goals, responsibilities, timescales and their progress.
- Use monitoring of school-wide plans to inform subsequent plans, and ensure that actions are fully established.
- Ensure that spending decisions align with the school's goals and priorities.
- Develop a tool to evaluate the impact of professional development on student learning.
- Continue to provide professional development to increase the confidence of staff to analyze and apply data in planning instruction.
- Explore ways to provide all students with access to music in their curriculum.

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 her administration team have acted firmly to establish a culture where the staff collaborates to support students in developing academically and managing their behavior. Underpinning this is the drive to improve instruction. The principal has been in post since January 2007 and many of her actions have already realized positive results. The inquiry team is established and is examining ways of improving math test scores in number sense and operations. The principal gives strong impetus to data analysis which is highly effective in identifying strengths and areas for improvement.

Each of the three issues from the 2007 Quality Review has been dealt with and actions are making a clear impact across the school. Formal common planning time ensures that all teachers meet to share data and plan in both grade and subject teams each week. A review of teacher strengths, curriculum needs and scheduling has led to increased rigor in instruction, although data has yet to show the impact of these changes. Rubrics are shared with students, who take more responsibility for evaluating their work before submitting it to teachers. Students are engaged by the curriculum and technology is used well for both instruction and learning but its breadth is restricted as music is currently not available for all students. The school is sensitive to students' home situations which sometimes adds to the challenge of working with families.

As a result of the clear code for behavior all sites run smoothly and any disruptive events are dealt with sensitively and in line with the code. Developing staff expertise and improving instruction are priorities at all sites and all staff engage in professional development, but there is no formal evaluation of its effectiveness. The school is successful in establishing and sustaining a diverse range of working partnerships with organizations in the community, which complements its work. The principal is certain about the actions needed to improve instruction and learning, but this is not clearly defined in current plans and shared with staff.

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.

All staff know their students very well and combine this personal knowledge with data to give an accurate and up-to-date picture of the progress and performance of each student. This gives them a deep understanding of the strengths and progress of standardized and

alternate assessment students. Data is gathered at the time when every student joins the school and this provides a secure basis for comparing future data to evaluate progress. Data is gathered to show progress and performance in academic subjects and students' emotional development, using formal and informal assessments by teachers, support staff and related service providers. This gives a balanced view of each student and reflects the priorities for learning and behavior. Great care is taken to track how bilingual student's progress in language especially communication skills, and this helps staff to distinguish between problems arising from a disability or from acquisition of language.

A small percentage of the students are girls and data is used to ensure that their progress is not compromised by being in the minority. Boys and girls make similar progress at all of the school sites. Data from the School Wide Information System (SWIS) is extensively used to identify patterns and triggers in behavior incidents so that known triggers can be avoided and future incidents reduced.

The principal interrogates data in great depth to pinpoint areas of strengths and under-performance in both instruction and learning. Her detailed analysis of students entering the school achieving at Level 1 makes clear precise causes for this under-achievement and lack of progress. The data is now being used as the focus for intervention to enable students to make increased progress and improve their performance. Analyses of data have also shown under-achievement in math, specifically in abstract questions within the tests. The school has dealt with this by strengthening staffing to increase opportunities for students to improve their skills in this subject.

Staff have received training and support to enable them to use Scantron assessments and apply the results to influence instruction to match students' needs. Not all teachers are fully confident in analyzing and using assessment results so the use of data to determine instruction is inconsistent.

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.

Coaches and administration provide a strong lead in the use of data to identify strategies needed to support individual students in making increased rates of progress, particularly in math which is a priority for improvement. Collaborative working is well established with teachers from every weekly grade meeting to review data and plan instruction. Additional meetings are held with academic intervention staff to review data on English language arts and math, to maintain the focus on improving academic outcomes in these subjects. As a result of secure processes to track skills in English language arts, additional intervention has been provided for 35 students to strengthen their foundation skills in the subject. Data is exceptionally well used to identify subjects and strands within subjects where some students need additional support to help them make progress. This ranges from staff providing focused input for individual students or groups, to changes in staffing and the structure of the curriculum to more closely meet the students' needs.

The overall goal for every student is to enable them to move to a less restrictive educational setting and at the start of the year staff make clear to them what they need to do to achieve this. Students receive regular information about their learning goals and the progress they make towards these. One student described this as, "We know what we have to do; learn and behave better." The school works hard to keep parents informed

about the progress made by students and find out what help they need to support their children. This is challenging as many students are in foster homes which may change during their time at the school, so family contacts need to be re-established frequently. Surveys and telephone calls are used well to seek the views of parents and guardians throughout a student's time at the school and involve them as much as possible.

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 has taken clear actions to ensure that the curriculum for standardized and alternate assessment students meets mandated requirements, through introducing science. Practical activities are blended into instruction so that students are directly involved with their own learning, which increases their interest in the subject. At the main site, a science laboratory provides a safe environment for practical and theoretical work, and includes small mammals which promotes high interest in learning including about the animal kingdom. Not all students have access to creative arts programs, which limits ways for some students to express their ideas and perceptions.

Students make extensive use of computers provided through the "Iteach/Ilearn" initiative, which has increased the number of laptop computers provided for them. Teachers also make good use of technology to engage students. Smartboards are now an accepted tool for instruction and teachers use them along with symbols, written and spoken information to adapt content to the needs of students.

The principal has worked hard and improved instruction, resources and the curriculum making the most use of the school's resources at all sites. Decisions about future spending relate to school priorities, but not specifically to a strategic plan. This means that spending does not always align well with the school's academic goals.

The attendance worker deals with absence promptly and attendance levels are improving. The school encourages students to arrive in school for the start of the school day and uses various incentives to achieve this. For example, in order to be eligible to play basketball, students have to attend on the previous day and the day of the game. Not attending on the following day means that a student is not eligible to join the next basketball session, so students encourage each other to come to school promptly.

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 makes clear her focus on improving the quality of instruction and has established systems to support this at all sites. The administrative team observes teachers regularly and their written feedback includes recommendations on how to improve. Teachers receive written memos after informal observations which confirm the areas to be improved or changed. They also learn from each other through visits to other classes, which they evaluate using an agreed format so that the observed teacher is clear about the focus. Forty percent of teachers are new to the profession and the school has a

robust and effective program to support and mentor them, so that they provide effective instruction. The result of the drive to improve instruction has been recognized by staff in general education classes at host sites, who observe instruction by Public School 17 staff. Teachers have opportunities to undertake extensive professional development, but this is not evaluated to show the effect it has on instruction and student learning.

Students take formal responsibility for their behavior through a personal contract for behavior which defines how they will behave and be supported in improving their emotional responses and social skills. They accept the school code to “Be respectful, responsible and safe” which helps them to feel secure at school. Clear expectations for good behavior and discipline codes have led to a reduction in major incidents and a positive atmosphere for learning.

The school ensures that students are well supported by having support staff at all sites, and a unified service is provided so instructional time is not lost. Information is shared with related service providers, so that all those working with a student have an accurate understanding of their progress and challenges. The school has extensive partnerships with organizations within the community, which support students and families in maintaining students at school, and staff through professional development.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The principal makes clear her commitment to improve instruction and talks of a five-year school vision to achieve this. She defined her priorities in ‘Next Steps,’ which set out actions needed to improve the school. However, these are not widely shared with staff or developed in school plans to prioritize actions at each site, responsibilities, timescales and how progress will be monitored, which results in a lack of consistency in monitoring progress. As a result, reviews of current plans are not fully used to shape subsequent plans and ensure that improvements are sustained.

Monitoring of instruction has led to changes in how staff is allocated during the year to make better use of individual knowledge and expertise. Great care has been taken to re-align the curriculum with test requirements, to ensure that content is now delivered before tests and not after to limit possible under-achievement in future tests.

The school has good systems in place to review progress made towards goals for students. Student individual educational plans contain goals relating to learning, behavior and transition to other schools. Regular monitoring of data is used to review intervention and make changes where needed, so that students can make the most of their time at school and work towards their goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 17 (X017)	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