



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Basheer Qusim School

Elementary School 053

**360 East 168 Street
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Collin Wolfe

Dates of review: March 12 - 14, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Jo Cheadle

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Basheer Qusim School is an elementary school with 1344 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 35.7% Black, 58.8% Hispanic, 3.6% White, and 1.4% Asian students. The student body includes 52% English language learners and 3.4% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 89.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 98% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students, staff and parents show great respect for the principal, who communicates his vision for the school's future extremely clearly.
- Leaders and faculty have very good knowledge of individual students' needs and work effectively to support their academic and personal development.
- The school pays very effective attention to the needs of English language learners resulting in improved outcomes for individual and school achievement.
- Professional relationships are built on mutual trust and respect which leads to high levels of collaboration and a distinct team spirit.
- Leaders wisely link the use of finances and other school resources to whole school priorities and decisions positively influence learning.
- Leaders have effectively embedded the cycle of monitoring, evaluation and action planning into school procedures.
- The administration clearly understand the strengths and weaknesses in teaching which directs individual and whole school professional development.
- Curriculum design focuses on facilitating regular and meaningful assessment and encouraging compelling and engaging teaching.
- There are very high expectations of students, staff and parents and members of the school community recognize their accountability for student progress.
- Parents are very happy that the school greatly encourages their involvement appreciates the support they provide to encourage their children's progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Enable all staff to use computerized management systems to easily access and analyze a range of student data.
- Regularly analyze outcomes for all student sub-groups, but particularly special education students to determine whole school priorities.
- Establish short term, "next step" goals for learning and consistently share these with students and parents.
- Investigate innovative ways to support the induction of new students, particularly those who join the school from other countries and cultures.
- Extend the use of teacher assessment for priority sub-groups to monitor and evaluate progress towards established whole school goals.

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.

At Basheer Qusim there is no doubt that every member of staff has an exceptionally clear understanding of the vision for student achievement. Through close analysis of where the school's academic challenges lay, members of staff have worked hard to secure improvement and ensure that students do as well as they can. Long-serving and new staff members are committed to serving students effectively. They welcome the accountability they hold to reach goals for student outcomes. The leadership of a wise, intelligent and caring principal lies at the center of the school's improving success. He is highly respected by staff and parents, and greatly admired by his students. In turn, the professional regard he shows to his staff, belief in each student's potential and the welcoming approach he has with all parents creates an extremely positive climate for learning. Whole school development goals are very clear, as are goals for individual students. Teachers do not always ensure however, that students and their parents know the exact "next steps" in learning.

Through regular and rigorous review, the school has a very good understanding of its past performance. The school's use of data is increasingly more effective and measures of current success are equally very clear. However, analysis and use of assessment information is not yet as rigorous as it might be to support suitable intervention and programming for every important student sub-group. In addition, the school does not monitor the progress of special education students closely enough to ensure consistently positive outcomes. Leaders recognize the necessity to enable access to all relevant data through an easily managed computerized system.

The work of the school's inquiry team is effective. The team has established a focus student group and area of academic progress in need of development. Members of the team have used Acuity and other assessment tools to highlight specific weaker aspects of reading development. They have agreed that teaching must pay greater attention to interpretation, inference and drawing conclusions. The group has discussed rates of student attendance and consideration of student learning styles. All students receive specific additional intervention, after school supplementary services and attend Saturday Academy. The team regularly monitors student progress and improvements are already evident.

Leaders welcome support and advice and this has encouraged good progress since the last Quality Review. New teachers have been selected wisely and the school now has a full and stable complement of staff. While leaders still seek to ensure consistency in all classes, there are examples of very good practice with differentiation. English language learners now make better progress and their parents are happy and involved. A new assistant principal oversees teaching and learning for the oldest students and the curriculum for students in grade 5 is interesting and motivating. The influence of a structured and organized approach to developing the school's work is evident in improved test results year on year.

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 proficient.

Leaders' analysis of the school's past performance is very good. It has informed all decision-making and action planning to move the school to its current level of success. Leaders make effective use of data to show where there are improvements and where achievement still needs to increase. Knowledge of individual students is very detailed and supported greatly by a real desire to care and nurture each child. Data pertaining to grade groups and classes is also very detailed. This information guides professional discussion with individual teachers and grade group leaders. The school also has a clear picture of gains made by boys and girls and within ethnic groups. Since the last Quality Review, leaders have paid particularly good attention to the progress of English language learners, recognizing that the achievement of this large student population has significant influence on overall school outcomes. Subsequent intervention and support for this group has encouraged better rates of progress and higher results in State tests. Leaders are now seeking ways to improve access to a full data set through computerized management systems. Members of staff welcome opportunities to use and interpret data and look forward to future training opportunities to supplement their rapidly growing skills.

Currently, gains made by special education students are not as good. Leaders do not make close enough analysis of existing data to pinpoint exact areas of weakness in learning and teaching for this group. Data reveals how rates of student progress vary greatly due to cognitive disorders versus learning affected by social and emotional influences. From well-collated data, members of the academic intervention team talked with insight about the implications their knowledge had for future classroom strategies. There are also other sub-groups very pertinent to the school that are not yet analyzed carefully enough. These include the growing number of new students who join the school in grades 4 and 5, some with limited English and no prior knowledge of school setting. Without this detailed analysis, leaders cannot plan to meet the needs of all students to improve school outcomes further. In addition, leaders cannot use this information to make comparisons with other schools in similar situations.

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.

There are high expectations of students and staff at the school. Teachers take their lead from the principal's determined belief that all students have the potential to do well. They know that they are required to make every effort to ensure this. The principal is clear that "it is all about expectations". Improving test results are proof that students at the school have the capability for greater success. Parents exemplify high expectations when they proudly describe their children's aspirations for future professions. They understand that the school has encouraged their children to have high expectations for themselves.

In order to ensure that the school meets these expectations, data analysis has supported leaders in establishing very specific whole school improvement goals. All members of the school community are very clear about these priorities and know that their work must influence overall outcomes. They are very aware of particular focus groups in greatest need of improvement, although attention to special education students at classroom level requires greater rigor. Nonetheless, they work with very good levels of collaboration to determine interim goals for individual students. The school does not have consistent procedures for communicating these goals to students and parents however. This means students cannot always explain the “next steps” in their learning and evaluate how well they are doing. Without knowledge of these simple steps, parents are unable to provide specific support at home or feel that they are making valid contributions to their child’s learning. This omission does not sit happily with the great value and encouragement the school shows for parental involvement. Parents talk gratefully of how the school has opened its doors to them. They appreciate the good lines of communication, the support for the development of their English language skills and the care that the school shows for their children. One parent described how the school had improved over the past years and how hard the principal works for the teachers and students.

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 a well-organized core curriculum that facilitates ongoing assessment opportunities in all classrooms. Most impressively, leaders and faculty have undertaken very good development work to ensure that there are meaningful and relevant links between subjects. Citing Piaget’s theory, “Construction is superior to instruction,” the school has established an educational ideology of integrating subjects that supports motivated and interesting learning. The school’s mission is not for students simply to pass tests. Instead, leaders and faculty measure success by the achievement of appropriate standards through learning that inspires students to make links, ask questions and want to know more. Test results are improving for all student groups as a result. The organization of homogenous classes goes a long way to supporting good match of work to student need. However, teachers are acutely aware that even within homogeneous classrooms their teaching must support a range of prior achievement levels, personal interests and learning styles. Differentiation is high on the school’s improvement agenda and the principal holds his staff strongly accountable for providing consistently good quality teaching. School leaders are very aware that pockets of extremely effective practice must now be common to all classes. Expectations are very precise, clearly articulated and teachers accept responsibility for their outcomes. Staff members embrace this level of accountability because there are excellent relationships between professionals who respect, trust and support each other.

The school continually seeks ways to enliven the curriculum, taking into account the varied needs of its students. There is a wide range of very interesting extra-curricular activities, but staff and students would like everyone to have an opportunity to participate and share the excitement of new experiences. For some students arriving at the school, new experiences may mean the introduction to a new language, a new way of living and new expectations about education. The school provides very well for the development of

English language and students make rapid progress. However, it is very hard for students and their families to assimilate all that is necessary to ensure that learning is consistently good through all subjects. The school has yet to think of innovative ways of providing for the very specific group of new students and their families who need support to acclimatize to a new way of living, thinking and learning.

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 has an excellent understanding of the strengths of his staff. Through very regular time spent in classrooms, he also knows where improvements are necessary. Beginning with the premise, "There are so many wonderful teachers here", he skillfully evaluates learning environments, interactions with students and teacher outcomes to establish a picture of "beginning, progressing and consistent" teaching. From this data, professional development is neatly tailored to suit individual needs that support progression towards whole school improvements. The principal, his assistants, coaches, mentors and other teachers sensitively and supportively nurture new members of staff to encourage the development of their skills and knowledge. One new teacher commented after a visit by the principal to her classroom, "He hit me straight on when he sent me on professional development for comprehension skills". Staff members believe that school leaders are "not afraid to get their hands dirty". For this reason, they know that advice and support is encouraging better teaching and better learning. Because the school is very well organized and everyone knows what is expected of them, teachers can get on with perfecting the job that they do with the students. Students too comment that the school runs smoothly. They say that they "...know what's going on in school", so they feel safe and can get on with their work. The school is led and managed in a highly efficient way.

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.

Leaders, faculty, parents and students express the school vision with exceptional clarity. The whole community strives to ensure that "Every child who is enrolled as a student at PS53X will: read, write and perform mathematically on or above grade level at the completion of each school year." The realization of this "simple" statement has involved very good strategic planning and continual self-evaluation. The principal's sole mission of "moving the school forward" is now measurable and convincing. In a gentle but very determined way, he leads his staff to analyze outcomes, make considered evaluations of whether these outcomes are good enough and devise plans to develop and improve further. His firm belief in what must be done to positively influence student learning is the driving force behind all that the school does. For this reason, the school is very self-reflective, continually seeking new ways to encourage better outcomes. In this school, critical analysis of data encourages new thinking and changes practice. Teachers understand clearly that evidence of progress towards the school's overall goals is measured by student outcomes. Leaders recognize that detailed analysis and action planning for specific student sub-groups, informed by regular and rigorous teacher assessment, is the next step in the school's review process to encourage further whole school improvement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Basheer Qusim School	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?			X		
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X		

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?				X	
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

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

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?					X
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?					X
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

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

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped