



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Dr William P Dorney School

Elementary School 072

**2951 Dewey Avenue
Bronx
NY 10465**

Principal: Margarita Colon

Dates of review: May 19 - 20, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Helen Donnellan

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Dr William P Dorney School is an elementary school with 921 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 27% Black, 61% Hispanic, 7% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility.

The school is a barrier-free environment which allows students with limited mobility to access all parts of the building. There are six collaborative team teaching classes and six self-contained special education classes, and some students participate in classes which allow them to learn in least restrictive environments.

The principal was appointed in February 2007 and hired a second assistant principal in March 2007.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal drives the work to achieve the whole-school goals and priorities to improve instruction and raise learning outcomes.
- Whole-school goals for improvement are specific, measurable and show targets for gains in performance at student, class and grade level.
- Robust systems to monitor instruction and learning provide a solid foundation for making staff accountable.
- The school has a clear picture of student performance and progress through clearly presented analyses of data.
- Most teachers provide positive effective, engaging and successful instruction which engages students and promotes learning.
- Data is used well to identify where students need support or changes of instructional approach or setting.
- The principal shows no complacency and uses data continually to determine future and immediate changes to instruction.

What the school needs to improve

- Maintain the drive to make differentiated instruction consistent across all grades.
- Ensure that teachers' goals are precise, with time-related interim benchmarks that provide a structure for yearlong monitoring.
- Express all student goals in clear and specific ways appropriate to student's understanding and share these with students and their parents.
- Establish protocols for behavior so that all adults model positive behavior to 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 proficient.

The principal was appointed in February 2007 and has worked steadfastly since then to raise standards of instruction and learning outcomes. She is determined to overcome the school's previous low reputation, staff morale and academic record. The second assistant principal was hired shortly after the principal. His constructive and focused support to staff and analyses of data are central to improving instruction and school improvement. These analyses and support are of great value in evaluating different intervention programs and strategies, helping staff to become more skilled in gathering and analyzing data and supplementing formal professional development. All teachers maintain binders with records of student progress, but not all of them take full advantage of information from the data to plan their instruction.

The culture of the school is now one of increased staff collaboration with parents welcomed as partners in their children's education. Instruction is more creative and good instruction is characterized by high levels of student involvement in classes. Differentiation is not established in a minority of classes and some teachers have yet to identify meaningful ways to share goals with their students and parents. The principal has high expectations of students and expects all staff to carry out their roles and responsibilities fully. She holds them to account but has yet to deal with the minority of staff who show little respect for students and are poor role models.

All the issues raised in the last Quality Review have been dealt with systematically. Data is used to pinpoint variations in learning outcomes between grade, classes and students. The administration makes extensive use of item skills analyses to identify where instruction results in successful learning and where outcomes are less strong. The Comprehensive Education Plan goals are very precise with clear objective measures for student progress and performance.

The inquiry team works with a group of general education students achieving at Level 1 or low Level 2 in English language arts. They are evaluating the impact of a range of support for these students to gain insights into how different methods lead to them making increased learning gains.

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.

The principal has established systems to ensure that teachers gather regularly informal and standardized assessment data on all students. Staff present this in a well-structured and consistent format, the school assessment monitoring system. Each teacher collects data showing the progress of students' in their class and performance across that grade. Even though this system was only set up at the start of the current academic year it is now established and teachers accept it as part of how the school operates. However, the weaknesses in gathering data before this mean that there is insufficient data to compare either progress or performance over more than one year.

The school now has a clearer picture of differences in learning outcomes for different ethnic and gender groups through well-structured and detailed analyses. This review also makes teachers aware of the different rates of learning for English language learners using different home languages. The new administration team explores data to gain even deeper insights into learning trends through more probing insights into subgroups. Some teachers make good use of data and their binders are well-used working documents, which show their help in planning. Other teachers are not active users of data and as a result are less well-informed about the needs of their students. Staff have received ongoing training and support in understanding and using data but not all are sufficiently competent or confident to use data as a basic tool for planning instruction.

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.

The impact of changes in instruction is evident through the number of special education students moving to less restrictive environments and an increase in the percentage of students achieving Levels 3 and 4 in English language arts State tests. Teachers in the higher grade classes make effective use of common planning time to plan instruction and set goals for their students, but this is not yet as strong in the lower grades. The principal is well-informed about student progress and performance through routine scrutiny of formal and informal assessments and uses her insights to deal with low student performance and teacher under-performance. She applies this knowledge of students to break down the whole-school goals into grade goals with clear actions and time-related interim benchmarks that show how progress towards the goals will be monitored.

Most teachers use the school's systems for sharing goals with students well. Some students have constant reminders of their goals on their desks which are meaningful as they use their own words for their own goal and the data source behind it. In other classes they write how their goals relate to particular tasks or subjects. Some teachers

express goals in complex language, which students cannot relate to their learning. In some cases, goals are placed out-of-sight, which reduces the students' understanding of what they are aiming for. The school has successfully transformed a culture where parents were discouraged to be involved in school life to one where they are welcomed into the school and two-way communication between school and families is increasingly widespread. During the Quality Review a group of parents spoke of a "greater connection" between families and the school, being more informed about what children are learning and how families can help learning at home. As a result of this change of culture, parent workshops and conferences regularly attract more than one hundred parents, which is significantly higher than in the past.

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 proficient.

The changes to the core curriculum mean that there is now close alignment between content and assessment and student progress can be readily tracked. At the start of the current academic year the principal introduced after-school programs which enhance the curriculum and are enthusiastically received by students. This is further testimony to the change in culture, with students eager to come to school which is reflected in gradually increasing attendance. The efforts to improve attendance also apply to staff. Staff absence and lateness has been reduced which also sets a strong example for students. All staff are now made accountable through robust systems based on clearly written job descriptions which define each teacher's roles and responsibilities. These allow consistency in making all staff accountable using fair and equitable criteria and systems. Currently there is no protocol setting out the standards for adult behavior towards students. Not all adults provide good role models for behavior and communication towards students, which at times conveys a lack of respect.

The majority of teachers quickly gained and applied skills in using data to plan and deliver differentiated instruction, but this is not yet consistent. Most teachers provide upbeat and positive instruction which engages students and enables them to be active and successful learners. The strong instruction offers students exciting content combined with high expectations appropriate to their needs. In a grade 4 science class observed during the review the teacher allowed students to mix the fuel propellant for a rocket they had made earlier. She challenged them with well-focused questions and their answers reflected a high level of knowledge about Newton's laws of motion and the ratio of propellant needed to launch their rocket. The outcome of their learning was a successful rocket launch and a satisfied class of astrophysicists.

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 proficient.

School leaders and coaches give teachers written feedback after their observations. However not all feedback is precise and rigorous enough to show what teachers do well

and how they need to improve. The principal carefully arranges professional development to include all staff who work with students which ensures that everyone is well-informed about changes and how they need to adapt. New teachers now receive effective support through focused mentoring. A significant number of teachers have moved to different grades this year and receive just as much support to make them secure in different curriculum knowledge and expectations of student outcomes.

An increase in the consistency of using the school's behavior codes has led to an increase in the number of suspensions during 2007-2008. Occurrences of unacceptable behavior are now tracked in greater detail which allows school leaders to pinpoint times and situations that trigger incidents. The principal recently introduced a positive approach to managing behavior but it is too early to see its full impact. Students are usually treated with respect, but not all adults provide good role models for respectful behavior and good manners. Students show high levels of respect to adults and each other which reflects mutual tolerance. The initiatives to promote student confidence and citizenship are flourishing and the work of community organizations complements this. Links between the student council and the local Assembly member help students to develop and practice inter-personal communication in mature and meaningful contexts.

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 school goals are clearly set out in the principal's performance review and a well-structured summary which links closely to the Comprehensive Education Plan. Both reflect the areas raised in the last year's Quality Review and issues highlighted by relevant academic test scores. The principal takes great care to align student goals with whole-school goals for improvement. Goals are set at class, grade and student level which ensures consistency. Even though the school and most student goals are precise, easily monitored and measured, teacher goals are not sufficiently sharp to allow for systematic monitoring of progress.

Even though monitoring and evaluating instruction and student learning has only been in place since the new principal was appointed, staff now accept it as part of school routine. Teachers and school leaders work together to examine student data and review student and whole class progress, and look carefully at specific intervention groups to determine whether further changes are needed in order to promote or sustain progress. The principal makes it a priority to keep up-to-date with student progress through formal and informal assessments and wastes no time in making well-founded changes to instruction wherever this is needed.

The agenda for building on the successful changes made since 2007 is evident through the cabinet minutes, which show plans to raise the quality of instruction, learning outcomes and increase the use of technology. The early stages of planning for the 2008-2009 academic year make clear the actions that will be needed in order to achieve the longer-term vision.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Dr William P Dorney 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