



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Dr Albert G. Oliver

Elementary School 093

**1535 Story Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Donald Mattson

Dates of review : May 19-20, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Lysbeth Bradley

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Dr Albert G. Oliver is an elementary school with 410 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 48% Black, 51% Hispanic and 1% of students from Asian and Native American heritage. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 78% eligibility.

The school shares the building with a Charter School, which occupies the second floor and there is dual use of facilities such as the auditorium and the gymnasium. It is in its first year as an empowerment school. The school serves bilingual special education students in 12:1 classes across the grades. Many of these students are bussed from some distance away.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The administrators and faculty have made good strides in the way in which they gather, analyze and use data to track student progress and pinpoint next steps.
- The school has been successful in raising student achievement in English language arts across the testing grades.
- Individual goal setting in reading, writing and math enables students to know what they are aiming for and what they have to do to succeed.
- Students enjoy learning, and are motivated by the opportunities to get involved in experiments, investigations and other hands-on activities.
- There is good trust and support at every level within the school community and everyone is working toward the same goals.
- There are good levels of collaboration between staff in using a range of data to develop the curriculum and instruction.
- Clear expectations and consistent practices make the school a safe and secure place where students behave well and work together supportively.
- The school works hard to communicate effectively with parents and to enable them to play a full part in their child's learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Make planning more rigorous by developing action plans with interim goals, benchmarks and timeframes to sharpen monitoring and evaluation procedures.
- Track the progress of English language learners throughout the year with the same attention to detail that is evident for other groups.
- Establish rubrics in science to capitalize on students' enjoyment and engagement in learning and push them to reach their full potential.
- Extend recent curriculum enrichment initiatives to involve even more students and teachers in challenging, multi-media learning activities.
- Maximize professional development strategies by linking informal observations more closely to teachers' individual goals and school priorities, and by sharing pockets of excellent practice.
- Take goal setting to the next level for students by involving them more actively in assessing their own work, identifying what helps them learn best and agreeing next steps.

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 school has made good strides since the last review and has established a solid base on which to sustain further growth. It has successfully used the areas for improvement as the agenda for change. Administrators, staff developers and teachers have worked well together to make much better use of data to understand why students were not doing their best and to improve the curriculum and instruction. The recent results in English language arts indicate a big increase in the number of students reaching Level 3 in all testing grades and reflect the intelligent use of data to raise expectations. The work of the inquiry team shows promise in its use of student perceptions, alongside hard data, to identify blocks and spurs to learning, and in how it is beginning to evaluate the usefulness of assessment tools for different situations. The one area where the school is not gathering, analyzing and communicating data to the same degree is in its work with English language learners.

Professional development has focused successfully on enabling teachers to generate and analyze data, and they have quickly got to grips with using Acuity to pinpoint areas of weakness. This has led to the setting of individual goals for all students in reading, writing and math. Teachers have used this information to group students for instruction. There is some excellent practice that takes good account of learning styles and levels of understanding, and should be shared more widely. The development of rubrics puts teachers in a good position to involve their students more actively in setting their own goals and in assessing progress towards them. This year, for the first time, supervisors worked with teachers to set professional goals, but regular informal observations do not align with these goals to enable supervisors and teachers to evaluate the impact of professional development activities.

Students are enthusiastic about the increasing variety of learning opportunities. The school has successfully embedded a chess program for all students in grades 2 through 5, aimed at developing strategic thinking. Some students have relished the chance to take part in challenging multi-media projects, and have gained in knowledge and confidence as a result. The school has also been successful in enabling students from pre-kindergarten onwards to work and think as young scientists. Developing rubrics in science has the potential to enable the school to capitalize on these strong beginnings and to establish the highest expectations for students in grade 5. The school takes a thoughtful and pragmatic approach to the implementation of new programs and initiatives. However, it has not established rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures with interim goals and benchmarks to enable the cabinet to gauge the effectiveness of each new program, to make timely adjustments to the implementation during the year or to measure the impact on teaching, learning and student outcomes.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has come a long way in the use of data. The assistant principals have taken the lead in increasing teachers' understanding of its potential. Consistent procedures and practices are established in the lower and upper grades for the content and use of assessment binders, with pockets of good practice emerging. Staff developers have also played a part in enabling teachers to use data well to develop the curriculum and to plan lessons that take account of what individual students know and can do. The school's analysis of data now puts it in a secure position to track the performance and progress of individuals, classes and grades and to make strategic decisions about organization, interventions and support. The school has significantly increased the number of students reaching Level 3 by using data well to pinpoint where Level 2 students needed additional support. Administrators and staff developers are now looking closely at the data to identify what teachers need to do to challenge those students who are within striking distance of Level 4.

The school monitors the performance and progress of its special education population and ensures that teachers in general education classes take proper account of individual education plans in setting goals for special education students in their classes. There is more work to do in providing the same level of information about English language learners in general education classes. Although the school has looked carefully at the data relating to gender and ethnicity, and is developing strategies to address gaps in achievement, it has not disaggregated the data for its special education and general education populations separately. This is particularly important as the bilingual special education classes are largely composed of Hispanic boys.

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.

Improvement in the quality of goal setting for individuals, classes and grades has been instrumental in accelerating progress and raising achievement this year. The whole community has joined forces to focus on this goal. The school has established common systems wherever possible in setting goals and has looked carefully at ways in which assessments tools used in the early grades can align with those used in the upper grades. Goals align with State standards and are specific and measurable, but do not yet take sufficient account of students' prior achievement. This means that higher achieving students are not challenged to reach their full potential. The work of administrators, staff developers and consultants has focused on enabling teachers to understand how to use data to set short and long-term goals for individuals and classes in order to raise expectations, particularly for those students who are close to meeting the standard. Teachers report that data analysis has enabled them to accelerate progress because they can judge more accurately when a student has grasped a

concept or mastered a skill and is ready to move on. Students know what their next steps are and what they have to do to achieve them. Now that teachers have become confident in using interim assessments and internal rubrics to pinpoint next steps, they are poised to involve students in assessing their own work, identifying what helps them succeed and agreeing what they need to work on next.

The school has improved communications with parents and caregivers. The parent coordinator provides a wide range of workshops for parents on matters relating to curriculum, and social and legal issues, as well as field trips and language classes. Teachers are readily accessible to parents and provide regular information about what the children are studying and how well they are doing. The school has not yet established consistent systems for sharing students' short-term goals with their parents so that they know precisely what they can do to help at home.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

There has been a real drive since the last review to ensure that the curriculum provides administrators and teachers with standards-based and meaningful data to drive instruction. This is because all members of staff work in a mutually supportive way and collaborate well to do their best for their students. The introduction of programs that yield valuable information in reading and the development of rubrics in writing and math have all laid the ground for developing teachers' ability to group students and differentiate instruction. The very best practice takes good account of different learning styles as well as planning activities that provide just the right level of challenge based on prior achievement, but most teachers are not as accomplished. The school is now ready to deepen the good work already established in science by developing rubrics against which to gauge students' progress and performance year on year.

Administrators have raised the bar this year and teachers have stepped up to the challenge. Together, teachers have built on the safe and secure learning environment that is firmly embedded in the school's culture. They are increasingly providing exciting and engaging activities in lessons, at lunchtimes and after school that motivate students of all ages and make them want to learn more. The school maximizes its excellent library resource and technology resources to link literacy with other content areas and to provide enrichment for higher achieving students. There is real potential in mainstreaming this work in the same way that 'Chess in School' has become part of the curriculum for all students in grades 2 through 5 to foster strategic thinking and to encourage students to consider peaceful ways of resolving conflict.

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.

The school's approach to building capacity has become strategic this year. Professional development is targeted closely on the key priority of enabling all staff to use data to

differentiate instruction. Teachers are collaborating more than ever before in different groupings. All discussions and decisions about the curriculum development and instruction are informed by data analysis.

Surveys have enabled teachers to identify where they need additional training and administrators have worked with teachers to set individual goals for the first time this year. The school has well established system of formal and informal observations. Although administrators provide regular feedback to teachers from their observations, they do not link regular informal observations to teachers' goals. This means that opportunities are missed for shared evaluation of the impact of targeted professional development activities and the chance to celebrate success and redefine goals.

The school runs like a well-oiled machine. Staff and students know what is expected of them and have internalized procedures. This leads to a calm, secure environment, where nothing gets in the way of learning. One student summed it up when she said, "Most of us learn a lot in one day". Relationships are good and students go out of their way to help and support each other. They enjoy the opportunities for learning outside of the school day that are made possible by the range of partnerships with other organizations.

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.

This year, all members of the school community have come together to focus on raising achievement. They have worked hard to implement effective goal setting procedures for individual students. This is the result of a more rigorous approach to the gathering, generating and analysis of a wide range of data and other information. There is some inconsistency in the frequency with which individual student goals are reviewed and redefined, but generally the system is proving effective in raising expectations. Although goal setting has been established for teachers, there is more work to do to ensure that they are sufficiently specific and time framed.

Teachers are making increasingly good use of predictive assessments and item skills analysis to adjust curriculum plans and targets and to modify instruction. The inquiry team is providing a steer to other staff in evaluating which forms of assessment yield the most useful information.

The school is using data well to make decisions about which programs to implement and sets about this in a measured way before rolling a program out school wide. At present, the school does not have action plans with interim goals, benchmarks and timeframes to enable it to gauge progress, make timely adjustments and quantify success. These measures would put the school in a better place to make strategic decisions about how to gain the most benefit from its budget and resources.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Albert G. Oliver 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 demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?			X		
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?			X		
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X		

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

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

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

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to 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