



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Philip J Abinanti School

Public School 108

**1166 Neill Avenue
Bronx
NY 10461**

Principal: Charles Sperrazza

Dates of review: November 7 - 8, 2007

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Philip J Abinanti School is an elementary school with 582 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 9% Black, 37% Hispanic, 34% White, and 15% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 95.7%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding. The school has a dedicated PTA and Parent Coordinator that continue to reinforce the importance of the home and school connection.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The cabinet is a strong team that monitors individual student's progress closely and uses the outcomes to plan the school's ongoing development.
- The school collects a range of assessment data that builds into a detailed profile of each student's achievement and progress.
- Individual goals in reading, writing and math give students good feedback and help them to know for themselves how to improve their work.
- Students are respectful and behave extremely well in class and, due to positive relationships, are confident to raise issues and express their opinions.
- A strong staff team works well collaboratively to make sure most learning is relevant to students' needs.
- The math curriculum and instruction are engaging and so students make good progress.
- The school enrichment model is effective in providing challenges to higher achievers.
- The school makes sure special education students receive the support they need to succeed.
- The school uses a strong core of teachers and coaches to spread good practice and support effectively those who are new to the school or the profession.
- The curriculum includes a broad range of subjects that interest students as learners.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop with the staff measurable goals for the school, each grade and class, and for groups of students that data has shown are close to moving up to the next level.
- Identify interim goals and benchmarks against which to monitor the school's progress towards reaching these goals.
- Record a strategic plan which includes a shared vision and details action plans on how the school will meet these goals.
- Uses disaggregated data analysis to investigate fully possible reasons and emerging trends in students' differential achievement.
- Continue to find ways to challenge higher achievers in general education classes.

Part 3: Main findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

There is a commitment and drive throughout the school to do the best for students, including support for special education students. Staff constantly look for ways of improving what they do, by trying to make learning relevant to the students, engaging and fun. Teachers are more successful in this in math, science, art and physical education because learning is more practical and hands-on. Students say that adults really care about them and help if there is any concern. The school involves students in generating rubrics and setting goals, and so they know precisely what they need to do to improve their work and achievement.

The school has a backbone of strong teachers and coaches who effectively support new colleagues. It has made some progress in improving those areas identified by the previous review as in need of improvement. The school enrichment model promotes a different way of learning that challenges higher achieving students' thinking as well as giving them different knowledge and skills. The school still does not monitor the progress of students closely enough to ensure learning is always challenging in class and prevent some students from slipping back, especially higher achieving students. As a result, students say that they often find the work too easy in class.

The student government enables students to put forward ideas and suggestions for events. Many students have good ideas for improving certain aspects of school, such as increasing the range of equipment at recess so there are more engaging activities for them to take part in. The school does not routinely consult students about such matters. Students make the daily morning announcements and detail the menu that they have worked with the kitchen to create.

The inquiry team has identified its target group of students for closer monitoring. The school collects a detailed range of data and uses this to monitor student progress but does not analyze data deeply enough to identify reasons for any disparity of performance between groups of students. School plans lack an overarching vision and do not include measurable goals with interim benchmarks and are, therefore, not as strong a tool to monitor the school's progress towards its goals as they might be. However, all staff continue to build their expertise in data analysis.

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.

Teachers carry out a wide range of assessments that gives them a clear picture of what each student knows and is able to do. They use the data very well to put students into small strategy groups in reading and writing workshops and in math. As a result, teachers

know that most students make progress. Individual portfolios include detailed assessment information that provides an ongoing record of each student's achievement and progress. The school monitors special education students' progress particularly closely and so is able to plan suitable interventions and supports to meet their specific needs.

The school uses its computerized system to create achievement graphs for each grade and for different subgroups, including boys and girls and the different ethnic groups. This enables the school to compare its performance each year and evaluate any improvements. For example, it knows that in some grades more Hispanic and Black students achieve at levels 1 and 2, and that in others this evens out due to the proportion of English language learners in the different cohorts. It also knows that fewer students achieve level 4 in English language arts than in math. It has not yet looked further into the data to identify emerging trends and possible reasons for this differential achievement and so inform its monitoring and strategic planning activities in a more targeted way.

The school has started to use ARIS to present student achievement data, to compare the school's performance from year-to-year and to evaluate improvement. It compares how well it is doing against other local schools. Training to help teachers use data to drive instruction is ongoing.

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.

Teachers give students clear guidance about how they can improve their work through regular conferencing, discussions and comments on students' work. Post-it notes record what each student has done well and what they now need to do to improve. These are translated into clear individual goals in reading, writing and math. Older students have these in front of them while they are working for quick and easy reference and so use them constantly to review and improve their work. Goals, which students are involved in setting, are sent home on brightly colored paper so are highly visible to parents and students. Parents are clear about how to support their children at home due to the range of opportunities to meet with teachers. Effective workshops and parent cafes are well attended because they are organized at different times of the day to suit the varied working lives of many parents.

Teachers use data well to plan interventions and support for students who need extra help to succeed in class, and when they work in small groups on focused tasks outside the classroom. Rubrics, some of which are developed with the students, are used regularly to help students self-assess and check their work. An effective grade 1 writing rubric gives very positive guidance. However, many rubrics detail what students are not able to achieve. Students achieving at level 1 are given a pat on the back for what they have achieved and receive clear guidance on what they now need to do to improve.

The school has not worked in a collaborative enough way to develop shared school goals and develop a strategic plan of action as to how these will be achieved. The school plan contains general goals that outline how many students are expected to reach grade standards. It has not collated the information it has for each student into precisely measured whole-school, grade and class goals in reading, writing and math. In addition, there are no clearly expressed interim measures for the school to evaluate how much progress students need to make in order to reach goals. As a result, the school does not have an ongoing measure of whether it is on course to meet its overall goals.

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.

During grade meetings, teachers look closely at assessment data for individual students and discuss possible strategies to support and improve learning.

The school's curriculum includes all mandated subjects which are aligned to the State's scope and sequence. In addition, there are regular classes in science, social studies, technology, art and physical education. Teachers identify links between these subjects to enliven learning and expand students' interest. Music is taught in 2 cycles. K-3 in the fall and grades 4-5 in the spring.

Scheduled school enrichment activities including reading groups, the school newspaper and robotics club engages and challenges the range of thinking styles of higher achievers. Some teachers are more adept than others are in developing these higher order thinking skills in class but this is not consistent practice in all classes. Instruction also varies between subjects. For example, when asked, nearly all students say that math is their favorite subject because it is exciting and there are hands-on manipulatives. Math problem of the month encourages students to apply their skills learned in class to real-life situations. As a result, students' achievement is higher in math and more reach the higher level 4. Students tell a similar story for science, art and physical education.

Teachers consider carefully how to differentiate instruction and in particular how to plan strategies for helping those who struggle to understand new concepts. This approach benefits students who struggle and has resulted in improvements in achievement for many students. However, it does not fully engage higher achievers who are capable of harder and more challenging work so that students close to and at level 4 have not made the same good progress. Students complain that they often have to sit while the teacher explains learning repeatedly until everyone in the class understands. They get further frustrated when the same learning is revisited the following day to reinforce the skills. The school is aware of this issue and is starting to address it.

The school has well-developed systems in place for building students' self-confidence and self-esteem. As a result, students are respectful of each others' views and feelings. All students have the opportunity to take responsibility for small jobs in the classroom and for making sure younger students are cared for during lunch and recess. Elected representatives of the student government play a more active role in organizing fund-raising events. Honored students like being recognized as "Citizen of the Month" for good deeds and having their picture displayed on the photo board for everyone to see.

The school makes regular checks of student attendance and lateness and follows up all unexplained absences and students who are constantly absent or late with families.

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 and assistant principal visit classes regularly and identify key strengths and areas that require improvement. Formal systems for giving more detailed written and verbal feedback have been enhanced this year so teachers know where, what and how to improve practice. For example, a key focus this year is on the implementation of the school enrichment model to challenge and extend the thinking of higher achievers and on how to use data to target students who are close to moving up a level.

The school has an experienced core of teachers that it uses to support colleagues and share effective practice well. Teachers meet regularly to discuss and reflect on instruction and to plan learning that is relevant to most students' needs. Teachers are always willing to give of their time to talk openly and honestly about their successes and ask for advice when they feel their practice could improve. Some intervisitations take place but these are not formally selected, scheduled or targeted to need as well as they should be. Some teachers have visited a school with a similar student population to learn how it has been more successful and brought back new ideas to implement in their own classes. Teachers attend workshops to keep up-to-date with latest research and to build new ideas into their practice. Teachers help new colleagues get to know school routines and procedures during formal meetings and informal chats. School leaders and coaches plan and organize effective meetings and training that helps them to get to know quickly the curriculum programs and requirements.

The staff who give specialist support to at risk and special education students work under difficult circumstances. They use the limited space available creatively so that students who need specific services receive them with at least some degree of privacy. Ends of corridors have been turned into small teaching spaces equipped with relevant teaching aids that support learning effectively. A number of community organizations support the work of the school. The YMCA runs a popular after school program while parents help in class through the learning leaders program.

There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere because everyone follows the routines and rules and responds positively to the school's expectations. Students have positive attitudes to learning. They move around the building very sensibly, treat each other kindly and behave extremely well in class.

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.

There are established procedures for staff to meet in teams to analyze data from periodic assessments, discuss student achievement and progress and review the effectiveness of current programs and interventions. Meetings have specific agendas, purposes and protocols. During the meetings staff look closely at the skills students have and have not accomplished and adjust curriculum plans and programs accordingly. The academic intervention team identifies ongoing services that effectively support students who struggle to reach grade standards. The school knows its students well and so plans carefully the next steps each student needs to take to make progress. The process of setting interim goals for individuals and groups of students' expected achievement at certain points during the year is not yet formalized. As a result, the school has not checked in a systematic way whether it is on track to achieve what it set out to achieve at the beginning of each year.

The principal has a clear vision for the school's ongoing development and this is shared by most but not all staff. Some staff feel that they are not consulted and involved as much as they could or should be. However, because the school's leadership does not have formalized systems for the collaborative review and monitoring of the school's performance against its strategic plan, it misses opportunities to use the strengths and ideas that other staff have to offer to set the following year's goals. As a result, there are still some areas that have to be improved if the school is to move forward at a faster pace. The school has a computerized system in place for recording assessment information which enables the school to analyze data quickly. However, not all teachers use it and so the process and effectiveness of recording, monitoring and evaluating student progress takes up more time than is necessary.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Philip J Abinanti	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 make 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		