



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Seton Falls School**

**Elementary School 111**

**3740 Baychester Avenue**

**Bronx**

**NY 10466**

**Principal: Julia Rivers- Jones**

**Dates of review: February 25 - 26, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: John Hudson**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Seton Falls School is an elementary school with 612 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 66% Black, 32% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 76% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Teachers and administration use a substantial range of high quality diagnostic data to promote progress.
- The principal and her senior team make frequent classroom observations to ensure teachers' instruction and students' learning continue to improve.
- Professional development and coaching is targeted to give every teacher the necessary tools to meet the learning needs of individual students.
- Teachers take full advantage of opportunities to observe colleagues' instruction and share effective practice.
- Teachers and administration collaborate well to raise the achievement and improve the progress of every student.
- The principal and her senior team use their good understanding of the school to make considered decisions on use of school resources.
- The school provides a broad and engaging curriculum with a strong arts component, particularly in art and music.
- High quality displays of student work and achievement throughout the school promote student self esteem and raise expectations.
- Parents and their children recognize and appreciate the quality of care taken by the school to improve personal and academic progress.
- The principal, strongly supported by the overwhelming majority of the school community, is driving the school towards continuing improvement.

### What the school needs to improve

- Share the highly effective instructional practices seen in many classrooms so that the learning needs of every student are met.
- Ensure that all students attend school regularly and demonstrate high levels of respect for themselves and their peers.
- Further develop the range of activities already in use to engage all parents so that every student benefits from opportunities available to them.

## 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.**

Teachers engage in high quality educational discussion, which is directed towards continuous improvement of student learning and progress and based on very good knowledge and understanding of what students can achieve. The school takes great care to compare progress and achievement among students, classrooms, grades, subjects and all groups of interest to it, including those in greatest need of improvement. The majority of students are encouraged by active and supportive parent involvement and the school is taking determined and effective action to ensure every parent is included. The principal and her administration ensure the curriculum is broad and well-planned. While most teachers make effective use of diagnostic data so that differentiated instruction is focused to meet the learning needs of students in most classrooms, this is not the case in all classrooms. The work of art and music specialist staff contributes strongly to a stimulating learning environment. The principal is building the capacity of the school through well-targeted professional development and coaching, with a particular focus on the management and use of data. The school makes very good use of available resources to improve learning opportunities and raise achievement and progress. Effective structures enable administrative and teaching staff to monitor and evaluate student progress and make necessary modifications to plans and practices to accelerate learning. While the school is safe and runs smoothly some students do not consistently demonstrate respect towards others. Since the last review the school has introduced a new data management system and uses this, and teacher-generated diagnostic data, to make considerable improvements in the collection and use of performance information. The school makes effective use of its growing understanding of student learning to track progress towards interim goals, target instruction and fine tune plans, programs and interventions more effectively. An active inquiry team has identified a group of male students whose academic and personal progress is less than satisfactory. Team members are working with their colleagues to provide support for this group and accelerate the learning of its members.

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

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

#### **This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school makes good use of available data, including school generated data, to gain a clear understanding of student learning and monitor progress over time. Teachers hold

extensive information on student performance in their data folios, including running records and information derived from, for example, the English language arts program Breakthrough to Literacy, Everyday Mathematics and the Sondag multi-sensory reading program. In addition, teachers are beginning to use the recently introduced Acuity data management system to gain weekly reports on individual student achievement and progress in English language arts and mathematics. These reports identify where progress is satisfactory, better than predicted or less than satisfactory and enable teachers to modify their instructional planning accordingly.

The administration has made good use of the ARIS management system to track the performance and progress of individuals, classrooms, grade levels and all other groups of interest to the school. Teams and individuals, including the inquiry team, coaches, the academic intervention team, special education teachers and teachers of English language learners, use this information to identify students who are at risk of underachieving as well as those who are progressing well. The inquiry team has identified that Black boys are overrepresented in the school's lowest achieving 30%. School research also reveals that some students experience difficulties interpreting certain word endings and that this is a barrier to their learning. The principal ensures that performance and progress among students, classrooms, grades and subjects is closely monitored. Yet school performance over time and in comparison with similar schools is measured as best as possible within the limits of available data. Teachers benefit from weekly grade level professional development sessions and, together with coaching by the mathematics and literacy coaches and other senior staff, these are used to build teacher capacity in best use of diagnostic data.

**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.**

Teachers make effective use of the frequent opportunities open to them to work collaboratively in teams, including grade level teams, to use available data to understand each individual student's achievement and their next learning steps. In this continuing activity they are strongly supported by academic intervention staff and subject coaches. Teams set interim goals for all students and measure progress at least six times per year. More frequent progress checks are made using weekly reports from the school's Acuity management system. Highly effective special education practice provides an excellent model for the very frequent and rigorous checking of progress in key subjects against detailed interim goals. This example is followed in the identification and improvement of performance of students in greatest need of improvement.

The school has set itself an ambitious program of improvement and shares its high expectations with all members of the school community. Parents and care givers receive regular information from the school about the progress of their children. The involvement of parents in promoting the achievement of students is very strongly encouraged and excellent strategies are employed to bring parents into the school. For example, grandparents' days, mothers and daughters and fathers' and sons' breakfasts, fathers' and daughters' dances, a summer family picnic and an end of year honors ceremony are very popular and impact strongly on home school relationships and student expectations. The school is working hard to involve a minority of families who are currently insufficiently involved in their children's education.

**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 developed a broad curriculum which provides diagnostic data to track student progress towards demanding annual goals. The curriculum extends beyond the school day and includes a strong focus on the arts. Students with a particular interest in art join the art squad, who keep all hallways beautifully adorned with stimulating displays of two and three dimensional student work and achievement. Students take great pride in seeing their own work given such prominence. Each grade 3 classroom is preparing its musical presentation for the school's end of year performance. The quality of art and music instruction and student achievement is high.

Teachers accept full responsibility for the progress and learning of students in their charge and, with the full support of collaborative grade teams, coaches and others, engage their students in an inclusive learning environment. For example, two classrooms, centrally located on one of the hallways, are composed of District 75 hearing impaired students. Much instruction is carefully planned with good use of current diagnostic data to provide suitably differentiated instruction. However, the specific needs of all students are not met and there are classrooms where class-focused instruction meets the learning needs of some, but not all students. Students and their parents report that students feel safe and well cared for. The school provides good support for the personal development of a small minority of students whose respect for their peers is inconsistent.

The principal and her administration use their extensive knowledge of student performance to make timely and necessary decisions on all resource issues. The focus is always to improve the quality of learning, accelerate progress and raise achievement. Student attendance and tardiness are carefully monitored and good attendance is very strongly encouraged with rewards for no absences. Students and classrooms maintaining perfect attendance are listed in a very prominent display area together with other celebrations of student achievements.

**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 her assistant principals and coaches use very frequent and regular classroom observations together with detailed performance data to monitor the quality of instruction and the progress of students. They use this information to develop suitable professional development and coaching strategies to improve student performance where this is found to be necessary. Teachers recognize that consistent application of high-quality differentiated instruction is a priority for the school.

Teachers use frequent, planned times during the week to meet and collaboratively plan their instruction. This has led to regular, informal teacher contact and a strong emphasis

on good quality educational discussion amongst the teaching and administrative staff. As a consequence, visits to each others' classrooms to observe and share good practice are common. In some instances, this has led to classroom observations in another school. The administration and her senior staff take great care to ensure teachers who are new to the school or the profession are given the greatest support. This includes induction in the measurement and use of data to monitor student progress and plan effective instruction.

Guidance and support is provided by community based organizations to help particular students. For example, one program, focused on boys, helps them to take charge of their lives, make the right decisions as they grow older and avoid the influence of local gangs. A mental health clinic is available after school hours to support families who may benefit from this service. Procedures to ensure the school runs smoothly are consistently applied and designed to encourage an excellent environment for students to succeed. Partnerships with other outside agencies promote the arts, particularly in the fields of art, drama, dance and music. These are popular and very effective in stimulating students' enthusiasm and raising their expectations.

**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.**

Effective use of a broad range of tests and diagnostic assessments across all subjects provide the principal and her staff with a very good understanding of student achievement and progress. Regular progress reports on all students from kindergarten onwards, in English language arts and mathematics, provided by the Acuity data management system together with information from the ARIS system, enable the school to evaluate each student's progress throughout the year. In some areas, for example in special education and in whole-school planning, the school makes very effective use of periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans, interventions and instructional practices, and make adjustments accordingly.

The school is aware of barriers to the achievement of its goals, including a lack of consistency in providing suitably differentiated instruction and taking timely action when a revision of plans is required. However, through continuous capacity-building it is determined to resolve these issues quickly. The principal and her staff recognize that challenging whole-school goals can only be met when suitably set interim goals at individual student level, across all subjects, are achieved. The school is making necessary adjustments in its strategic planning to bring these two areas of goal setting closer together. The principal, who has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, her colleagues and others in the school community are working collaboratively to drive the school forward and effect further change.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Seton Falls School</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					X

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>