



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Public School 176X
Elementary – High School 176**

**850 Baychester Avenue
Bronx
NY 10475**

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**Dates of review: January 10-11, 2008
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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 176 is a special education school with 509 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12+. The school population comprises 45% Black, 40% Hispanic, 10% White, and 5% other students. The student body includes less than 2% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 85% of the students enrolled and girls account for 15%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 91.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 64.9% eligibility.

The school serves students on the autistic spectrum who range in age from almost three to 21 years of age, with over 90% following the alternative assessment curriculum. There are 80 classes, which are housed in four community schools; two elementary, one middle and one high.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school uses 'state of the art' methodologies and strategies which it adapts constantly to meet changing individual student needs.
- The curriculum is broad and relevant with a wide range of artistic, creative and physical pursuits to enrich experience and excite interests.
- The emphasis on teacher observations and intervisitation, alongside excellent support for new teachers, results in highly effective teaching and learning across the school.
- Student achievement is driven by individualized, incremental goals, based on current and continuously produced data and revised whenever necessary.
- Parents are full partners in their children's education and the vast majority work with the school in tandem, using continual exchanges of information.
- The outstanding culture of collaboration among all members of the school community leads to high levels of trust, support and mutual respect.
- The school constantly strives to find the very best combination of curriculum, teaching method and teacher for each individual student, and all work is fully differentiated.
- There is an atmosphere of joy and positivity throughout the school and students show extremely high levels of enthusiasm for and enjoyment of learning.
- The school has excellent relationships with many outside organisations and has developed a full program of work experience to aid transition after graduation.
- The strong emphasis on personal and social skills facilitates smooth integration into life after school and prepares students with the best possible foundation for entry into what may seem an alien world.

What the school needs to improve

- Formalize data collection about ethnic groupings in the school to determine trends and identify possible issues for further research.

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 outstanding.

Public School 176 is a center of excellence for students with autism, educating a huge range of ages and cognitive abilities. Even so, it works with every student on an individual basis so that they can fulfill their full potential at their own pace, at their own level and in the way that best suits them. The whole school community, including the administration, teachers, therapists, support staff and parents work collaboratively to facilitate this. All activity in the school is underpinned by data, which is continuously being generated and analyzed by staff working with the students. Short- and long-term goals are consistently relevant and timely. All work is fully differentiated at all times with all students. The curriculum uses 'state of the art' methodologies and strategies and staff consistently ensure that they adapt their teaching to the disparate learning needs of their students. There is an excellent range of artistic, creative and physical pursuits throughout the curriculum which enriches the students' experiences and excites their interests, including swimming, drama, music, dance and craft. For older students, preparation for working life includes a wide selection of work experience opportunities at all levels and there are several enterprises in the school itself, such as a real working café. Because the school serves all levels of abilities, higher achievers have the opportunity to attend general education classes as inclusion students and to go on to college. There is an atmosphere of joy and optimism which pervades all the school activities and is demonstrated by staff and students. The school is constantly adapting to suit the changing needs of its students and this, coupled with strong leadership by the administration and total sense of purpose, has led to an organization which fulfills the potential of and raises achievement in all its students. At present, the school has not fully explored outcome differences between students from different ethnic backgrounds, as autism affects everybody in a different way, regardless of race. However, the school intends to further disaggregate its data in this way to see if cultural attitudes to the condition affect the progress of its students and to help with future planning.

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 outstanding

The use of data is embedded into the work of the school and drives virtually all activity. All staff are confident working with it to enable each student to realize their potential. In

every classroom, data is collected and acted upon continuously. Each student has their own detailed data folio with a combination of measures and tracking instruments. Rigorous monitoring is carried out daily, weekly or monthly depending on the nature of the activity. All areas of each student's experience are completely covered including literacy, technology, the arts, practical and creative pursuits, behavior and life and communication skills. Classes are constructed after precise analysis of student data and are carefully matched to teachers. English language learners are grouped together and tracked individually as they have to be taught slightly differently from autistic native speakers. There are comparatively few girls in the school, but there are three girls' classes, one in each age range. In these classes, gender specific pursuits are followed for part of the schedule, as the school appreciates that working with their interests is vital when trying to engage autistic students. Currently, data is not fully disaggregated into ethnic background as no discernible differences have been found, but the school intends to research this to ascertain if cultural attitudes to autism affect the progress of students and to assist in future planning. Students' performance in all aspects of their school experience is tracked meticulously year on year. This data is used to match up resources and programs and to set the levels of support and appropriateness of environment required for each student. The school is unique in its range of ages and abilities so has difficulty finding similar schools to compare performance and progress. Certainly, comparative data is used to find partner schools with whom to split funding when necessary. The school is a centre of excellence for autism, both nationally and internationally, and comparisons are sometimes more appropriate with schools further afield to ensure that it stays at the pinnacle of excellence. Excellent standardized systems across the school are being refined constantly. Professional development on data is extensive, both internally and externally and there is widespread support available for all new teachers.

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 outstanding

Extensive collaboration in goal setting is evident in every team across the school. Case study meetings are frequent and include all personnel involved with those students, from teachers to paraprofessionals, to parents and therapists. This has facilitated the effective spreading of good practice and has resulted in excellent communications and speedy interventions. An example is the social skills curriculum, which is the subject of the school inquiry team. Students in inclusion classes were identified as needing improved social skills to facilitate their integration, and a program led by an autism expert was initiated for them. Following the success of this initiative, it has been rolled out throughout the school. This is already having a hugely positive impact on the communication levels of all students. Staff members are quick to identify the intervention needs of all students and a wide variety of strategies are speedily employed, including program modification, a change of group or teacher or different teaching and learning methods. Parents are regarded as genuine partners in their children's education and information is passed between them and the school continuously. Continuity is regarded as fundamental to each student's success, so goals and strategies at school are conveyed home and vice-versa. For older students, this includes transition plans. Detailed progress reports are sent to parents regularly and students bring home a useful daily communication notebook in which parents send

messages, reports and information back to the school. A variety of forms are also available in case parents prefer different communication methods. Related therapists in the school contact all parents at least twice each month. Detailed surveys are sent home several times throughout the year, which update the school on students' likes, dislikes, achievements and interests. This facilitates the individual tailoring of the curriculum to each student. Parents, students and all school staff have very high expectations of themselves and each other. An example of this is that every student leaves the school with an appropriate work placement to aid transition into life after school.

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 outstanding

All curricula in the school are selected, wherever possible, for their ability to provide measurable data, such as the EDMAR reading program and the STAGES information technology program. Where programs do not naturally include systems for data collection, such as music or chorus, the school has initiated its own. Subscribing to the philosophy that the arts lift people and that everyone can be successful, there are a huge range of activities available. Every student has the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and the school works closely with the Harlem School for the Arts. Other activities include ceramics, photography, collage, puppet making, jewelry making, chorus and several bands that specialize in various kinds of music from drum and bass to Latin American dancing. There is a very strong emphasis on life and social skills. This assists students to live in a world that is often alien to them. Staff consider themselves totally accountable for the progress and wellbeing of their students. Every student is profiled and monitored continuously and work is differentiated to an impressively high degree. All instruction and approaches arise from the needs and skills of the individual students. Teachers work in close partnership with paraprofessionals to allow every student to work at their own level and pace, using a wide variety of highly effective strategies and methods. There are several programs available for every subject as students have differing cognitive profiles. Engaging students in class is paramount and interactivity is emphasized throughout as is praise and encouragement. A large number of curriculum support specialists throughout the school advise and support teachers whenever necessary. As a direct result of this close cooperation, students show great enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of, learning throughout the school and there are extremely high levels of mutual regard and affection. The administration constantly reinforces the need for staff to model good behavior, including appropriate language, tone of voice and even volume when speaking. This has led to students demonstrating high standards of social and communication skills, both in and out of school, which is a remarkable achievement for students with autism.

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 outstanding

Each of the four assistant principals is responsible for one of the school sites and they work together, ensuring continuity and excellent communications. Lesson observations are frequent and detailed, with appropriacy of content and method and its impact on individual learning being the main priority. Intervisitations by peers are commonplace so good practice can be shared, student can be assessed or the effects of change to strategies or programs can be monitored. This collaboration is prioritized at student transition times to aid in the planning of the most appropriate programs. Intervisitation by new teachers is mandatory during their first year so they can become familiar with data collection and use, teaching and learning strategies and how to respond to the needs of individual students. All new teachers are carefully mentored by an experienced teacher and are assigned a curriculum support teacher who logs all meetings and reviews. Weekly meetings are held during their first year, where case studies are presented and discussed. These measures are successful in inducting teaching staff quickly so they are cognizant, not only of the school and its procedures and strategies, but also with the students and their very disparate needs. Professional development decisions arise from observations, new programs, data and from student needs and, wherever possible, are personalized according to the experience and abilities of the staff member. Youth and personal development services are built around students' needs. The girls' classes, for example, were instigated to fulfill their social needs and interests, and they have been successful in encouraging their communication and social skills. Students included in general education classes are supported by a successful buddy system called "best buddies". Students from the host school are trained in befriending and mentoring the students, which raises disability awareness in the schools as well as offering support and full inclusion. The school has created many valuable partnerships with community organizations which enhance the student experience such as Ramopo where residential activities are held, and Bronx Zoo. There are a large number of organizations for work experience including Kmart, the visiting nurse service and St, Mark's Theatre. The school also has its own successful commercial enterprises such as SAGES, a real working café and "Its' A Wrap", which produces individually designed chocolate wrappers for special occasions. Both of these prepare students with real life work experience of running and working in a business and, for some students, of managing people.

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 outstanding

The school's long experience and sophistication with data has resulted in extremely well-organized plans that include interim goals and benchmarks. Plans are quickly changed as soon as identified as necessary. The philosophy of the school is "we change the plans, never the child" and the continuous monitoring, combined with the variety of teaching methodologies and flexible scheduling, ensures that all students are working at their optimum. The school selects hugely varied diagnostic tools, such as the twice-yearly Brigance, to set or amend long-term goals and, using these tools, the outcome of

periodic assessments is rigorously tracked. Different or new assessments are frequently designed by the school if commercial assessments are unavailable, as the principal says, “to measure the un-measurable”. Every outcome of each plan is used to drive the next stage of goal setting on a continuous basis. All members of the school community share a common vision, which is to bring the best programs, practices and people to their students so that they can have the best quality of life they could possibly have. They are constantly striving, with amazing success, to find the best fit for each individual student.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: PS176X	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