



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Poe Cottage School

Elementary School 246

2641 Grand Concourse

Bronx

NY 10468

Principal: Beverly Pascal-Miller

Dates of review: May 21 - 22, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Jean Mackie

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Poe Cottage is an elementary school with 826 students from kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 12% Black, 81% Hispanic, 2% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 36.5% English language learners and 8.2% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 89.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 90% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides clear and purposeful leadership to the school.
- The school has collected a wide range of data to monitor performance and track student progress.
- Data has been used well to group students with similar needs and target focused support for them, especially English language learners and special education students.
- The curriculum generates meaningful data, which allows the school to identify what is working well and where improvements need to be made.
- There is a positive climate throughout the school, reflected by constructive relationships between students, their peers and adults.
- Parents and students value the academic and personal support and guidance that the staff provide.
- The professional development program is well informed by data and is closely matched to the needs of the whole school and individual teachers.
- The school has used data well to inform adjustments to scheduling and budgeting.
- The school, with good support from its partners, provides a rich arts program.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue the drive to support teachers in their use of data to ensure that work is consistently matched to the needs of all students.
- Build on the positive climate in classes to provide more regular opportunities for accountable talk amongst students.
- Ensure that the lessons learnt from the work of the inquiry team are regularly used to inform other whole school improvement priorities.
- Use the increasing wealth of data being collected to set realistic but challenging quantitative annual and interim goals so that progress towards the school's aspirations can be more easily measured.
- Develop the role of the grade leaders so that they can play a more strategic role in implementing the school's goals.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal, with good support from the assistant principals, has taken rigorous steps to tackle the issues identified in the previous Quality Review. She has established an instructional team, which is working effectively to systematize data collection and analysis at all levels within the school. As a result, there is a much clearer picture of performance and progress of students at individual, subject and grade level. The principal and her team know the strengths and areas for development well. There is a clear and shared understanding of the direction of the school. Data is used to monitor the impact of programs, resulting in some important changes, such as the departmentalization of the fifth grade. The staff are fully committed to the students' academic and personal development. These aspirations, however, are not formally encapsulated in quantitative interim and annual targets so that progress towards goals can be more easily measured. The inquiry team has made a significant contribution to the work of the school through its focus on the progress and support for a small group of fourth grade students.

The school uses data well to identify and provide support for the most needy students, through careful grouping and additional interventions. The curriculum, while suitably focused on literacy and numeracy, is enriched through a strong arts program, which is well supported by external partners. There is some lively instruction, although practice is variable, with missed opportunities for accountable talk. The principal is aware of the inconsistencies and has arranged some well-focused professional development to support staff. This is already having an impact, especially in the awareness of and confidence in the analysis of data. Relationships are positive within the school, with students eager to learn and do well. Teachers provide them with much valued support. The administration is proactive and is already considering ways to strengthen the role of grade team leaders, for example. The school is well placed to develop further.

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 gathers a good range of data and analyzes it in detail to establish a clear view of student performance across the whole school, in different grades, classes and in

different subjects. The data has been shared with the whole staff so that everyone is aware of the overall achievements of the students. The principal and her team have already scrutinized the 2008 English language arts results to see how actions taken this year have affected performance. They have noted a pleasing increase in the outcomes for the fifth grade when compared to their results in the fourth grade last year.

The school knows its population of special education students and English language learners well. Their performance and progress are carefully tracked through a range of assessments related to their specific learning and language development needs. The language proficiency levels of the English language learners, for example, are closely monitored. The school's analysis of interim assessments in both English language arts and math has resulted in a secure understanding of the relative performance of different ethnic groups and different grades. The leadership team has also noted variations in performance of boys and girls. These findings are leading to reviews into the curriculum and instructional practice. The school is careful to compare its current performance with that of previous years. It is also actively researching those schools that have similar contexts to its own, to inform its practice and benchmark its performance. The principal and coaches have visited several neighboring schools to support this process.

Teachers are developing their skills in the analysis and use of data following support from the data and curriculum coaches. They produce their own assessments and are increasingly using rubrics to reflect expected standards. Practice is not yet consistent, however, with varying levels of confidence and competence amongst the staff.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal and her staff are fully committed to both the personal and academic development of the students. These high aspirations are reflected by the school's overall goals and action plans, particularly for English language arts and math. There are, however, no specific quantifiable targets to underpin the ambitions that the school has for its students. The instructional leadership team has, nevertheless, worked collaboratively with teachers to use data in a number of ways to accelerate students' learning. For example, academic and personal data is used to inform class groups. Each grade has a bilingual class, with specialist teachers, so that their needs can be more closely met. Special education students are supported through small co-taught classes and, in some grades, a self-contained group.

Teachers in kindergarten through grade 3 use Reading First data to establish homogeneous groups within their classes so that they can provide an appropriate level of challenge for them. A range of teacher and test data is also used constructively to identify students in need of additional support so that interventions can be planned for them through extended day sessions, for example. The various support teams within the school work closely with teachers to ensure that the interventions are appropriate.

The school uses a range of strategies to communicate its expectations and procedures to parents. The handbook, monthly calendars and workshops all support parents' understanding of the work of the school. Report cards, direct contact and parent teacher

conferences provide regular opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress and next steps. Documents are sent out in English and Spanish and translators are available at meetings to ensure that all families have access to the information provided. Teachers confer with students to discuss their work and identify how they can improve. Students value this support and, for the most part, are eager to achieve their 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.

The curriculum is appropriately focused on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills. The school also provides a strong arts program and makes good use of the attractive playground facilities for physical education. Science is high profile, with lots of hands-on activities for students. Interim assessments provide regular information about the effectiveness of the curriculum. The school has identified, for example, a lack of continuity between the Reading First program and the Teachers College approach to English language arts. It has also used the data to identify skill weaknesses across grades and subjects.

Teachers hold themselves accountable for the progress that their students make. This is reinforced through data analysis, classroom visits and learning walks. Teachers often present lively and engaging lessons, which capture the imagination of the students. There are some good examples of highly challenging approaches, with work that is well matched to the students' needs. Practice is variable, however, and not all teachers are using data regularly to ensure that tasks are closely linked to the range of needs within their classrooms. Opportunities for accountable talk are often missed.

The principal has made good use of data, both qualitative and quantitative, to inform scheduling and budgetary decisions. She has introduced, for example, a departmental approach in the fifth grade to strengthen the curriculum and instructional practice in those classes. An additional guidance counselor has been hired to support the school in its endeavors to sustain and strengthen the very positive relationships that exist within the school. Mutual respect between students and adults is evident around the building, which is a safe and secure environment. Parents and students value the academic and personal support and guidance that the staff provide. Attendance is a high priority for the school, which has secure systems for pursuing absentees and those who are tardy, although there is still much room for improvement.

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 principals have developed a good understanding of the quality of instruction through data analysis, formal observations and learning walks. This information, along with a teacher survey at the beginning of the year, has been used well to plan the professional development program. There has been a strong focus on

developing skills in data analysis and differentiated instruction. Various members of the instructional team, including the literacy and numeracy coaches, have provided some much-valued training, which has linked research findings into practical applications in the classroom. The AUSSIE consultants have made valuable contributions to the development program.

The principal recognizes that skills and practices remain variable and is fully committed to ensure that focused support is provided where it is most needed. She has created time in the schedule for grade team meetings where teachers share ideas and evaluate practice. Teachers have also been part of the learning walks, which have proved very enlightening for them. There is an enthusiasm to learn from each other and refine instructional skills. This collaborative approach, plus the mentoring program, has ensured that teachers new to the school have quickly been inducted into its customs and practices. They have settled in well. Staff would value meeting time with cluster teachers, although they recognize the scheduling difficulties this would entail.

Teachers work very closely with the full range of support teams in the school to ensure that students' personal and academic needs are met. The guidance counselor has provided training for teachers to help them broaden their range of strategies for ensuring positive climates for learning in their classrooms. The whole staff work together for the benefit of the students and, as a result, systems for ensuring the smooth running of the school are implemented consistently. There is a good range of partnerships, most notably with art, drama and music groups, which are very effective in supporting the aims and aspirations of the school.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has clear plans for improving student outcomes, but these are not formally supported by measurable interim goals. Nevertheless, there is a clear sense of direction and commitment to secure improved achievement levels. The principal's instructional leadership team meets regularly to scrutinize data in order to monitor the impact of the work of the school. In this way, the team is aware of what is working well and where improvements need to be made. As a result of the drop in performance in grade 4, the school has reviewed its curriculum and has begun work to develop greater continuity in the English language arts program.

Teachers analyze data at grade team meetings to monitor the effectiveness of their programs and where adjustments need to be made. The grade team leaders provide helpful direction in this respect, but their role is not yet clearly defined and, as a result, their impact at a strategic level is not as strong as it could be. Teachers and support teams frequently meet to discuss the progress of special education students and English language learners. They adjust programs and individualized education plans where there is a clear need to do so. Similarly, teachers revise and respond flexibly to students' needs in their classes as a result of evaluation and assessment. The principal and her team are determined to build on the good practice to ensure that all is equally strong. There is good capacity within the school to secure further improvements and take the school to its next stage of development.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Poe Cottage Elementary	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