



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Public School 723**

**Elementary - High School 723**

**3540 Bivona Street  
Bronx  
NY 10475**

**Principal: Christine Walsh**

**Dates of review: January 7 - 8, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Louise Kapner**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

PS 723 is an elementary-high school with 398 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 46% Black, 50% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 76% of the students enrolled and girls account for 24%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 84.5%. Title 1 is not applicable for this school.

PS 723 is 12 month school with nine sites located throughout the Bronx serving students with emotional and learning disabilities, autism and developmental delays. Three of the sites are day treatment programs and one site is both day treatment and residential. The ninth site was added in September 2007. A small number of students are eligible for the New York state Alternate Assessment.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is highly committed to creating a safe environment where all students can be successful.
- The assistant principals each bring their strengths to the administration of the school and contribute to its success.
- The school collects a wide range of data to monitor the performance of students.
- The school places a high priority on establishing clear rules of behavior to engage students academically.
- Highly effective partnerships provide valuable mental health services and enhance the instructional program.
- Professional development is an integral part of the school program and provides opportunities for teachers to learn best practices.
- Teachers, paraprofessionals and staff members of the school community demonstrate a dedicated approach to working with fragile students.
- The school makes a concerted effort to involve and inform parents about their child's education.
- The school is providing a rigorous instructional program instruction to improve student outcomes.
- The school regularly revisits and makes suitable adjustments to its programs to ensure student success.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop school-wide instructional and grading rubrics, and a congruent grading system to provide clear expectations to students.
- Disaggregate data by ethnic groups and other categories of interest to compare student performance and progress.
- Refine and standardize data collection systems to ensure ongoing monitoring of student performance and progress.
- Continue to implement the workshop model and integrate literacy into the specialties to provide students with opportunities to improve their skills.

## 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.**

Since assuming the leadership role less than two years ago, the principal has made a positive impact on creating a cohesive school organization that focuses on students' instructional and emotional needs. The principal, her capable assistant principals and dedicated staff work as a collaborative team to meet the needs of fragile students. The school faces many challenges. Staff effectively collaborate with agency personnel at four sites, and the school's program addresses a wide-range of students' disabilities well. The collection of students' data from a wide-range of assessments varies from site to site relative to the students' disabilities and provides teachers with a wealth of information. This is used to set individual goals in behavior and academics. However, there are no formalized structures in place to track ongoing assessment results to guide instruction. Additionally, at this time, the school does not disaggregate data by ethnic groups, nor by other categories of interest. Differentiated professional development opportunities are regularly provided to staff. Teachers and paraprofessionals draw upon best practices to engage students in suitable learning activities. However, structures for teaching literacy are not consistently used in content area classes or specialty subjects. Teachers' comments on student work provide some guidance, but in many cases this is not consistent and is not congruent with report card grading. Some classrooms display instructional rubrics but this is not evident in every class to enable consistent sharing of high expectations with students. The school is addressing effectively each area noted for improvement during the 2006-2007 quality review. Students participate in their individual education plan meeting to be part of goal setting. Donated funds are earmarked for a "family day" event to encourage parent participation. The inquiry team is well underway targeting students who present the most challenging behaviors. The school works hard at welcoming and supporting parents and providing a nurturing environment for all students. The administrators recognize the need to continually review and make suitable changes to the school's program to improve student outcomes.

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

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

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

The school's collection and review of students' results on standardized assessments and school-generated information relative to the academic and behavioral performance of all

students is at a very high level and is reflective of the wide-range of students' disabilities. The data is used well to match instruction and create a positive environment in which students can achieve. The introduction of internal diagnostic assessments such as "Read 180" enables students to receive appropriate concentrated instruction to improve outcomes. Their behavior modification program, 'The Power of Choice', is customized to each site's needs. Of particular note is the decrease in the number of reportable Level 5 incidents at the main site. However, this degree of data analysis is not evident for ethnic groups, or for other categories of interest such as residential versus day-treatment students. All teachers are provided with the student evaluation report from 'Automate the Schools' that provides a comprehensive snapshot of past performance. Teachers have binders in which they maintain ongoing students' results in school-generated assessments. A portfolio checklist indicates work to be collected. They use the data to know the academic levels of their student's. However, at present there is no uniform tracking sheet in use by all teachers to monitor students' performance and progress.

The school does a good job of measuring its overall performance against its past results by students, grade and subject. Results in the science test showed that at the sites where there were science cluster teachers students performed better on the standardized exam. A school with a similar student group provides the principal with a good level of comparison on student performance. The main site now departmentalizes content area instruction as a result of analysis of comparing their student results on the standardized exams. The school is committed to collecting and developing uniform systems, and further training teachers to use data to improve student outcomes.

**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, specialists, and paraprofessionals work together in and out of the classroom to address the learning and emotional needs of each student. A significant level of collaboration between agency personnel and school staff members is highly evident at the off-sites. Weekly clinical conferences enable staff to review student data, set measurable goals, revisit, and revise plans as needed. Formalized treatment plans are reviewed every three months relative to the goals on each student's individual education plan. Teachers work hard to engage students in learning. Teachers use assessment data to plan suitable instruction. Classroom organization reflects attention to students' needs with a great emphasis on monitoring and modifying behavior to support individual and whole-group instruction. One student said, "What we do affects our grades." However, expectations are not consistently shared with students. Instructional guidelines are not always displayed from class to class or site to site. Some student work reflects teachers' responses. This is not, however, uniform, nor are grades congruent with report cards or levels on standardized exams. A vast majority of students receive individual or small group academic intervention services during the school day. Classroom teachers and paraprofessionals use suitable materials to address student's learning needs and styles to improve their outcomes. Administrators and staff meet regularly at each site and work together as a whole group on designated professional development days. They are committed to creating a school that provides students with opportunities to grow socially and reach their academic potential. Workshops, written communication, face-to-face meetings and teleconferences keep parents informed of their child's progress and school expectations. As one parent said,

“School personnel love the kids and try their best to help.” Using surveys and checklists, parents are also encouraged to share information about their child. Parents also welcome the opportunity to learn “how to do it” with their child at home. The parent coordinator is an excellent resource in this process.

**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 school’s curriculum is based upon meeting the needs of its diverse population. A standards-based curriculum provides standardized assessment students relevant instruction in all content areas. Instruction is supplemented with differentiated materials suitable to the needs of the students. “Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-Handicapped Children” methodology creates classrooms that encourage smooth transitions for the alternate assessment population. Mayer Johnson symbols and the Picture Exchange Communication System are effectively used for non-verbal students. Assistive technology devices further enhance the ability of non-verbal students to interact with the community. Arts education has been given a high priority by the principal. She effectively budgets “Project Arts” funds to enhance the school’s program. Autistic students are engaged in a music movement program for sensory motor development. Staff members are held accountable for good instruction. The principal recognizes the impact of teacher consistency on student learning. Results from standardized assessments and school-generated data are used to guide instruction. A departmentalized program, at the main site in all subjects, provides instruction focused on improving student outcomes. Teachers are highly encouraged to use the workshop model of instruction to provide a comprehensive and differentiated approach to teaching literacy. However, currently not all teachers regularly incorporate this approach into their teaching. The school-wide “Power of Choice” program is site-specific and tailored to meet the needs of the students. The program encourages students to grow socially and greatly supports creating a safe and nurturing environment.

The principal reviews data carefully to provide a clear framework for decisions in staffing, scheduling and use of funds. Beginning in February, the main site’s schedule will be revised to include clubs and gym first period to encourage the punctual arrival of students. Highly effective procedures have been implemented to ensure students are in school. Attendance continues to improve from a low of 79.5% two years ago to 85.7% thus far this year.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The principal and assistant principals share responsibilities for the school’s nine sites. Clearly established procedures set guidelines for instruction and student behavior to ensure consistency. Mentoring of new teachers follows mandated regulations and newly assigned paraprofessionals receive relevant training. When suitable, changes to teaching assignments make certain there is a good match between teacher and students’ needs. Administrators use the informal and formal observation process to

ensure classroom instruction and environment are appropriate. Teachers welcome the opportunity to have conversations, appreciate the feedback, and implement the suggestions to support student learning. Coordinators also assist staff to ensure the smooth running of each site. Professional development is well matched to teachers' and students' needs. Extensive opportunities to attend on- and off-site activities are offered to all staff. Teachers are often encouraged to participate so they can implement school programs effectively. The school also contracts with consultants who bring best practices into the school and work side-by-side with teachers to enhance their skills. This year the Birch Family Services are providing a high level of support for teachers of the autistic students. Regularly scheduled teacher inter-site visitations are limited due to coverage and scheduling issues, but are arranged on an as-needed basis. Presently, the administration is reaching out to another school to provide sharing of best practices for the alternate assessment. Site-based teachers regularly meet on common planning time to share information and best practices. Students are well supported by service providers to address academic and personal growth. Highly effective collaborations with mental health agencies provide superior therapeutic interventions. School-based counselors regularly visit classrooms to help students develop good social skills. Highly effective behavior intervention plans are developed as needed to address the needs of more difficult students.

**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.**

Administrators and staff are very proud of the school's prior year accomplishments and are very focused on continuing to address students' needs to improve outcomes. A careful review of last year's data and ongoing review of this year's data derived from periodic and school-generated assessments provide the school with relevant information on student performance and progress. Adjustments to classroom instruction, school scheduling, and behavior intervention plans are ongoing throughout the year. Administrators use data to identify successful classroom practices and to provide appropriate support to staff to implement modifications as suitable. Departmentalization at the main site and the addition of dedicated science cluster teachers are an outgrowth of looking at student data and identifying the need for greater structure and focused instruction in the content areas. The Comprehensive Education Plan encompasses all sites. Administrators and parents at each unit participate in 'PASS' reviews to identify site-specific issues. The principal is continually looking to the future to create an organization with a strong identity and instructional program, along with appropriate behavioral interventions, to enable students to attain success. Staff input is encouraged and welcomed as the school continues to expand their capacity to meet their students' needs.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Public School 723</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 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	
<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?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				X	