



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

P4K School

Early Childhood – Elementary School 004

**530 Stanley Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Deborah Evans

Dates of review: March 10 – 12 2009

Lead Reviewer: Mick Megee

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P4K is an early childhood - elementary school with 276 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 70% Black, 20% Hispanic, 7% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 5% of English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 78% of the students enrolled and girls account for 22%. The average attendance rate for the 2007-2008 was 83%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

This District 75 special school provides education for students with a diverse range of special education needs across six different sites in Brooklyn. The school educates students with autism, hearing impairment, emotional disturbance, mild to moderate retardation, multiple disabilities, and other disabling conditions. Class staff ratios reflect students' needs, at 12:1:4 (students to teacher to paraprofessional), 12:1:1, 9:1:3, 8:1:4, 8:1:2, 8:1:1 and 6:1:1. The majority of students follow alternate assessment programs, with 16% following standardized assessment courses.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

P4K is a school where there is a very strong collaborative effort between all staff and parents to provide students with effective teaching in a nurturing and caring environment. 'A beautiful school with beautiful people' is one typical comment from a parent. Data collection is coming along well, although there is still more to do in ensuring that all content areas, programs and instruction are driven by a detailed understanding of how well individuals and subgroups are moving forward. Staff generally have high expectations of what students can achieve, and the school conveys these expectations regularly and effectively to parents through a daily detailed exchange of information. The school provides students with a good range of activities and programs, supported well by the increasing use of new technology in the classroom, such as Smart boards. Teachers modify and adapt the curriculum well according to students' needs using a good range of practical and multi-sensory approaches. This helps students to achieve good intellectual, social, physical and emotional growth. Target setting and reviewing is effective in English language arts, math, social studies and physical education; although it is underdeveloped in other subjects. This makes it difficult to judge how effective the instruction has been in those areas. Staff provide consistent support and guidance that very effectively brings about rapid improvement in behavior. Teachers skillfully match most activities to meet the range of different needs within each class. The students' individual education plans determine all instructional decisions. However, there is some variation between teachers in their level of skill in differentiation. This means that in some lessons, one or two students may have work that is too easy or too difficult, and this holds them back. The new principal has settled in well to the school and is already bringing about improvement to what is already an effective school. Innovations are not yet always precisely evaluated to ensure that they have a positive impact upon student outcomes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The new principal has effectively gained the confidence and commitment of the staff, parents and students around her vision for the future of the school.
- The range of data gathered provides staff with a useful picture of the students' individual performance and this helps them to make good progress.
- The strong partnership with parents means that there is a common understanding of how to move students forward rapidly.
- High expectations, coupled with a strong emphasis on life skills, leads to fast improvement in personal development, especially in behavior and attendance.
- The varied and often exciting curriculum is well rooted in students' individual education programs and supported well by the increasing use of new technology.
- Staff work very well together as a team across all the sites, and have plentiful opportunities to develop their professional skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all teachers closely match classroom activities to all the different needs and abilities of their students, particularly the least able.
- Extend the existing good work in data collection and utilization to all of the core subject areas.
- Ensure that all subgroups of students achieve equally well, by analyzing their performance and progress and by taking any necessary action promptly.
- Ensure that all actions and goals are evaluated by measuring their impact upon student outcomes.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school gathers a useful range of data on individual student performance through the continuous assessment of the students' achievements within the classroom. In this way, teachers have a good picture of students' individual strengths and areas of need. Data analysis includes information in the form of portfolios of work, results of the Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS), data sheets showing progress towards individual education program targets and results of New York City and State tests. The school collects detailed information on the students' progress in English language arts, math, social studies and physical education. The school does not yet gather detailed information about the students' progress in all other core subjects. The school gathers some information in English language arts and math about the relative progress of the different ethnic and gender groups within the school. However, the school does not routinely collect this information across all the content areas. This means that the school does not always know whether any group is achieving less well than others.

Much of the school's work is focused on improving students' social development, particularly their social interactions and behavior. There is much good work at the school in monitoring and analyzing what sort of support each student requires. This preliminary work means that staff can straight away deploy the most effective strategies so that students quickly become ready to learn and get on track. There are very good reward schemes, such as the 'gotcha bucks' where students gain tokens for good work that they can exchange for food.

The school makes good use of the picture exchange communication system (PECS) to develop students' ability to make choices, and also to give the students prompt feedback on how well they have performed. The PECS breakfast, where students through pictures, request what they wish to eat, is a very positive experience for both staff and students alike. Through the school's encouragement, many families use the PECS system at home to help their children become good communicators. As one parent said, "My boy was completely non-verbal. Now he's a great communicator. He's come a long way in no time at all." Families receive frequent, good information in the daily communication folder about their children's academic and social progress. They appreciate the advice and guidance provided by staff so that they can carry on the good work at home. They report that the partnership with school, especially in improving communication, lowers their children's frustration and turns their children round quickly, so that home life becomes relatively normalized. The school monitors attendance assiduously and follows up quickly where a problem may be developing. Because of the school's vigilance, attendance continues to improve.

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 administration involves all the staff and parent representatives in setting goals within the Comprehensive Education Plan through the regular School Leadership Team meetings. In this way, the school ensures that everyone has the same focus and shares the same big picture. Not all the goals set in the plan are sufficiently specific in terms of measurable outcomes for students. The school sets goals for some groups of students, for example for boys in math, but does not yet do this for all groups in all subject areas.

There is good collaboration by teachers, related service providers and parents to review and set individual goals for each student. Each student has their own detailed set of goals across a range of areas including communication, math, physical education and functional life skills. These goals contain precise criteria by which the staff can easily measure success. Staff carefully display students’ individual goals in each classroom, with a ‘special alerts list’, so that all staff are immediately aware of how they can best assist the students in making progress. All staff, including speech and occupational therapists, provide students throughout the day with guidance on what improvements they need to make, and how to achieve their next steps. Staff formally evaluate the students’ progress towards meeting their goals four times a year.

The school makes sure that parents have a good understanding of their children’s individual goals. Parents know what they are and provide the school with vital and welcome information about how well the students are doing at home. This information is conveyed formally every month in a written progress report. Parents particularly appreciate that the school has high expectations of what their children can achieve, particularly if the children are very young. As one parent said, “They are miracle workers. Even the doctors say they can’t believe how far my boy has come at this school.” The administration and the faculty demonstrate their commitment to high standards in academic performance by the ways they encourage parents to work with their children during holidays and at weekends, providing them with effective guidance and resources.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

Students in the school have a wide range of needs. The school organizes its classes and curricula through good assessments of those needs, and offers a good range of classroom support by varying the student to adult ratios. All students participate in small group and individualized instruction. Students who participate in standardized assessments are engaged in the New York City core curriculum, which is suitably modified. Although for most students these arrangements mean that instruction is well matched to their needs and abilities, not all teachers are equally skilful in precisely adapting classroom activities, especially for the least able students.

The school provides some very exciting opportunities for students to be successful. There are good opportunities to develop their fitness through swimming and the C.H.A.M.P.S. club funded by the New York Jets. There are innovative readers' and writers' workshops as well as programs in gardening in the 'Paradise Garden'. The school's curriculum supports pupils' personal development well through its 'Be a Sport' and positive behavior programs. These programs cleverly involve the use of puppets to create positive expectations in a way that is creative and memorable.

The staff support each other very well and provide the students with good role models in how to collaborate and work together as a team. The staff show their respect for the students in the way they talk to them, attend to their difficulties and listen with interest to their comments and questions. The school has distinctive and very effective approaches to managing behavior. These strategies, coupled with the small class sizes, mean that there is a very positive atmosphere in almost all lessons.

The school has responded well to its last Quality Review by improving the use of technology, such as laptops, Smart boards and desktop computers in the classrooms. These are providing students with enjoyable opportunities to undertake independent research and work. Not all teachers are yet equally adept in ensuring that the most effective use is made of the technology, but a good program of professional development has been arranged to provide support where it is needed.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Staff greatly value the support they receive from the administration and from each other. There is an open and informal system of intervisitation to share good practice. Teachers find the formal lesson observations, together with the written feedback, helpful in improving their classroom practice. Each teacher has their own professional development plan, carefully aligned with New York professional teaching standards. The plan contains specific individual goals for improvement based mainly on the outcomes of the lesson observations, but sensibly includes the teacher's aspirations and reflections. A member of the administration sits down with each teacher at least once a year to share a frank but sensitive evaluation of the plan, 'to keep us on our tiptoes' as one teacher put it. Evaluations are not quite as precise as they could be because plans are not yet formally linked to student outcomes or whole school goals. Teachers who are new to the profession receive good support from both the administration and their more experienced colleagues, which enables them to improve their practice quickly. One new teacher said, "My colleagues are always there for me, ready to give me whatever help I need."

The school's three inquiry teams are undertaking effective action research with sample populations of students. The team is demonstrating to the rest of the staff how to identify and remedy underachievement through the intensive use of data. For example, one team is working with six students who are causing concern because of their relatively slow progress in reading. By careful diagnostic testing and data analysis, combined with a wide range of intervention strategies, almost all of the students have made rapid improvement in their reading comprehension. They are now more enthusiastic and willing readers and are attempting to read a greater volume of more difficult books.

There is good teamwork between teachers, paraprofessionals and the various service providers, such as speech and physiotherapy, to promote the students' personal growth. One can see in this in the effective teamwork by all staff to improve behavior. Common planning time is scheduled to ensure that there is joint approach to meet students' needs. The school participates in the City's Therapeutic Classroom Initiative to improve the collaboration between the students' instructional and therapeutic teams. This is having a very positive effect on students' progress because they receive reinforcement of their developmental skills throughout the day. The students report that they feel safe and that there is no bullying in the school at all.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 operates across six separate sites and, in order to ensure consistency across all the sites, the administration has organized a number of committees which meet monthly or weekly to plan and evaluate various aspects of the school's work, such as technology, literacy and behavior support. There are regular conferences of all the staff to ensure that there is school-wide involvement in monitoring the progress of the goals set in the Comprehensive Education Plan. Each marking period, staff review the progress made in students' individual education plans and review and adjust interim benchmarks. The school does not yet gather sufficiently specific information in all the content areas, such as the arts or science, so that it can monitor progress and revise plans where necessary. The school evaluates the performance of some subgroups in some content areas, but there is not yet a systematic analysis of all the subgroups within the school. The cabinet meets weekly to conduct regular checks as to whether goals are likely to be reached, and to take prompt action where necessary. For example, through their data collection in literacy, the administration recognized that not all students were reaching their potential in writing. In response, the school introduced the Teachers' College writing workshop throughout all of the school's sites. Follow-up data collection has shown that this has had a very positive impact upon the literacy standards.

Professional development is aligned to underachievement identified through data analysis and classroom observation. However, the school does not yet always effectively evaluate the school-wide professional development plan to find out formally what impact professional development has had on improving student outcomes. The new principal has settled in well, and has ensured that the school's standards have been maintained, and that the drive for improvement has not slackened. She has gained the commitment of the staff, parents and students around her vision for the future. Although she has been in post a short time, she has correctly identified the need for the school's self-evaluation practices to be even sharper. She has accurately recognized that some of the monitoring systems in some core subject areas have been too informal, and have not provided a sufficiently well focused picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: P4K	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?		X		
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X				
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X					
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X				
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X				
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X				
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X				
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X				
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X				
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	▷	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed