

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Public School 66

Elementary – Middle School 66

**845 East 96th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Joel Rubinfeld

Dates of review: December 1 – 2, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Sue Alton

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 66 is an elementary-middle school with 691 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 86% Black, 10% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 94.8%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The highly respected principal has established effective collaborative systems to distribute leadership, resulting in all staff sharing responsibility and ownership for school goals. Staff work collaboratively, take responsibility and are closely involved in planning whole school goals. Students enjoy school, behave very well and want to achieve. They value the diverse curriculum which provides a good range of learning opportunities including the arts. As one teacher said, "We develop the whole child, not just academically, but socially, musically and intellectually."

The school collects a wide range of data, which is used to plan groupings and programs. Staff meet regularly, both formally and informally, to evaluate practice and analyze data in order to improve instruction. These meetings enable teachers to maintain a good understanding of the performance and progress of individuals, classes and grades. Following the last review, there are now effective systems to record student progress and analyze progress across classes and grades, supported by the principal and data specialist. However, as in the last review, this information is not used consistently by teachers to plan differentiated instruction so that work is not always matched to student needs, building on previous learning.

Interim goals are in place for school plans but these are not always clearly articulated in order to strategically evaluate progress and make adjustments. Although staff work closely together to analyze data, and set goals for students, students are not always actively involved in this process, which means that they do not always fully understand their short term goals and what they need to do to improve within a given timescale. This area remains an area for improvement from the last review. Parents value the very good and frequent information they receive about their child's goals and progress as well as suggestions to help them support their child at home.

Professional development is well planned, carefully evaluated, differentiated and very well focused. It is based on individual teacher's professional development plans and whole school needs. Following the last review, teachers are provided with written feedback following observations which clearly identifies what they need to do to improve and how this will be followed up. The school has a good range of resources including technology and there is now an increased focus in professional development to support teachers in using technology to support learning in the classroom. This is an area which is still developing as teachers improve their skills and confidence.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Effective distributed leadership systems, established by the highly respected principal, result in all staff sharing responsibility and ownership for school goals.
- Students behave very well, want to achieve and enjoy the diverse curriculum which provides a good range of learning opportunities including the arts.
- Professional development is well planned, carefully evaluated, differentiated and very well focused, based on individual teacher's professional development plans and whole school needs.
- Teachers use data effectively to maintain a good understanding of the performance and progress of individuals, classes and grades.
- Strategic organizational decisions are made collaboratively and ensure the good range of resources support school goals and instruction.
- Administration and faculty provide frequent opportunities, both formal and informal, for staff to meet to evaluate practice and analyze data in order to improve instruction.
- Parents value the very good and frequent information they receive about their child's goals, progress and how they can support their child at home.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure all teachers use differentiation consistently in order for work to be closely matched to student needs and goals, building on previous learning.
- Refine systems to involve students actively in the goal setting process, so that they fully understand their goals and what they need to do to improve within a given timescale.
- Ensure all plans have explicit interim goals in order to evaluate progress strategically and to make adjustments.

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 well developed.

The good range of systems for data analysis enables the school to establish a clear baseline at the beginning of each year, using a variety of assessments. This information is used strategically to organize classes and decide interventions. It is carefully monitored to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions and to make changes. Data provides teachers with a wide range of information about individual students, classes and grades in all subject areas, which is used effectively to identify individual student and group strengths and areas for development. Close analysis identifies the progress of different groups, including students who enter the school in Grade 6. Portfolios provide clear evidence of progress in math and English language arts and pupils articulate their learning clearly as they discuss the work in these portfolios. Teachers are well supported by the data specialist who, together with the principal, leads regular and focused meetings to analyze data, using technology, for individual students, classes and grades.

Students know their general learning needs and understand their end of year goals to pass the grade and rubrics provide general guidance on "next steps". However, despite this, the active involvement of students in establishing interim curricular goals is varied, so that not all students fully understand these and what they need to do to improve within a given timescale. One student could articulate how he needs to focus on context clues in English language arts, but this understanding of short-term and long-term goals is not consistent across the school.

Parents receive regular information about their child's progress. The principal outlines a minimum communication expectation for all teachers, and many exceed this through the use of email and websites. Parents are welcome in school to discuss their child's progress and particularly value the regular communication they receive from teachers, enabling them to support their child at home to achieve short term goals and complete assignments.

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

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

Staff meet regularly, both formally and informally, to review data and to plan for individuals and groups of students. Long-term goals are realistic and differentiated according to previous learning. There are clear systems to identify those students who need support, to track their progress and make adjustments to groupings. This is

facilitated by the close collaboration between teachers and services to establish a consistent approach to instruction.

School leaders and faculty set interim goals and benchmarks, which are checked at the end of each unit. However, these are not always explicit and understood by students. Nor is data used consistently by all teachers to plan effective differentiated instruction to meet the differing needs of students. This means that some lessons lack pace and students are not always appropriately challenged.

The very good systems of distributed leadership and delegation result in all staff sharing ownership of whole school goals and taking responsibility. The whole school community is involved in the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan, which establishes school wide goals for student achievement and is reviewed regularly at a range of meetings including faculty conferences.

Continual improvement of student achievement is high profile for the whole school community and there are ongoing conversations about the school goals and how to achieve these. Students and parents are fully informed of the expectations of the school. Parents show a good understanding of their child's goals through the regular information they receive. As one parent said, "Our children are not a face. They take time to get to know our children and help them." Recently introduced advisory sessions provide focused opportunities for middle school students to discuss their goals, but the impact of this is not yet evident in student conversations about their short term goals.

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 well developed.

The school provides a broad and interesting curriculum and a good range of cluster subject opportunities for different grades, which students enjoy and would like more of. Benchmarks and rubrics, including the Blueprint program for the arts, support continuity and progression in all subjects and enable teachers to track student progress closely. Good opportunities in the arts are carefully linked to other subject areas and reinforce learning effectively. An example of this is a dance lesson which encouraged students to count, listen, and focus clearly and be active in their learning, developing their self confidence very effectively.

Teachers' use of differentiation to plan instruction based on students' prior knowledge and learning is inconsistent, resulting in slow pace and low expectations in some lessons. Improving differentiated instruction rightly remains a focus for professional development. In the best lessons, students are grouped according to need and expectations are clear. In these lessons students are encouraged to discuss ideas with their peers and to participate fully in the lesson, helping to deepen their understanding.

Strategic organizational decisions relate closely to student achievement, for example, the decision to change the school day and introduce period 9 to address writing standards, leading to improved attendance at these sessions. The school has a good range of resources, for example, technology. However teachers do not plan for this consistently as a tool to support student learning. The new technology specialist is working to extend teacher capacity and confidence, supporting them to plan and design

lessons which are interactive and promote student engagement and this is evident in some lessons.

Well maintained displays of student work around the school are eye-catching and reflect students' commitment to their learning. Students interact well across classes and grades, supported by opportunities such as "reading buddies" and citizenship programs. The impact of this approach is evident in the responsible approach of students, their respect and honesty, for example, one student found a \$50 note and handed it in to the principal.

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 well developed.

The principal's continual focus on the importance of learning for everyone extends to teachers. He ensures that professional development encourages staff to reflect on their practice and develop their skills. This results in a staff team who are focused on improving their skills to achieve school and student goals, as well as developing their own leadership skills, enabling them to take part in decision making and planning. All teachers, including those new to the school or teaching, receive very good support based on their individual needs, identified in their individual professional development plans. There are frequent opportunities for teachers to meet, both informally and formally. The impact of this extensive range of professional development is evident in the way that all teachers are able to use data to maintain a good understanding of the performance and progress of individuals, classes and grades in order to identify programs and support and make changes.

The inquiry team uses data to carefully identify the focus of the group and the students who will be targeted. Although the targeted group made some progress last year, the focus group is now a new group identified by data analysis. This is those students in the high Level 2 or low Level 3 range in reading. Their progress is carefully evaluated at regular benchmarks and there is already a change in students' attitudes to reading, through their stamina, approach to books and responses to the simple question, given at the beginning of the project, "Would you like a book for a present?"

Support services provide a range of resources for students and their families which enhance personal and academic growth. New advisory groups support middle school students well in achieving their goals. As one student said, "Even if you're a grade A student, you still need to know how to remain there." The wide range of partnerships with community organizations extends learning opportunities for students very well. A good example of this is the link with Skidmore College which helps to raise student aspirations, encouraging them to focus on their goals and as the principal says, "Provides them with tangible experiences of what life has to offer and the exciting learning journey ahead of them."

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 well developed.

Long term and measurable interim goals are set for individual students, classes and grades. Administration and faculty continually evaluate and monitor student progress through the year for individuals, classes and grades. Although there are established processes to review progress at interim checkpoints and to use data to inform instruction, differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students is still inconsistent and remains a focus of professional development.

The school's approach to improvement planning is strategic, based on an evaluation of the previous plan and analysis of data, including the progress report, findings from the inquiry team and a range of assessments. Although interim goals are not always explicit within the Comprehensive Educational Plan, they are identified along with specific benchmarks for review, in order to evaluate progress. The school has effective systems to evaluate strategies and processes in order to make further improvements, however, the impact of these on student achievement is not always fully evaluated and recorded.

The principal's clear vision for the development of the school is echoed by teachers as is his view that "all students are gifted." One teacher said, "We look for the good in every child and work from there, building on their strengths" and this is evident in the very positive ethos. There is a collaborative approach to whole school planning and frequent opportunities for reflection and debate across the school support the commitment to further improvement. Leadership is distributed effectively throughout the school ensuring staff accept responsibility and ownership for school goals, which are very effectively shared with the whole school community.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Public School 66	△	➤	✓	+
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, DYQ, 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
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