

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

The Gravesend School

Elementary - Middle School 095

**345 Van Sicklen Street
Brooklyn
NY 11223**

Principal: Carolyn Telesmanich

Dates of review: December 8 - 9, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Richard D D'Auria

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Gravesend School is an elementary-middle school with 920 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 8% Black, 33% Hispanic, 31% White, and 28% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 93.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 63.8% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school effectively supports teacher development through a variety of strategies. Coaches work with teachers and model effective teaching and learning strategies in six-weekly cycles. Selected teachers have opportunities to expand their practice through participation at professional conferences such as the University of Connecticut "Confratute" on the Renzulli School Enrichment Model (SEM), participation at a staff professional development retreat, and the use of an internal consultant. While teachers acknowledge and value professional development and the assistance of the consultant in their organization and interpretation of data, a clear link to learning outcomes and increased student achievement is not yet evident.

Efforts are underway to align available resources with student learning needs as assessed through data analysis. Accordingly, the school recently purchased a computer-assisted program to enhance learning for English language learners. Data on the effectiveness of this program are forthcoming.

Teachers are adept at collecting and tracking a wide range of data in their individual data and assessment binders. However, class visits evidence limited implementation of differentiated teaching strategies, and this practice is not yet apparent or consistent across all grades and content areas. In addition, the administration, teachers, parents and students acknowledge that they have just begun to use, regularly monitor and revise student specific goals with interim benchmarks over time.

Teachers value the camaraderie that exists among colleagues, and parents take pride in the strength of the school's Parent Teacher Association in disseminating information and thus keeping them well informed. However, there are concerns regarding the level of open communication and collaboration among the various stakeholders within the school community and these sentiments are reflected in the school's Learning Environment Survey.

Student performance and progress measures indicate that students are not yet performing as strongly as comparable schools. Outcomes from professional development are not yet evidenced in students' accelerated progress and achievement.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal articulates a clear vision of high expectations and rigor for all and this is exemplified in the level of student engagement and respect.
- Professional development is effectively differentiated and embedded into the school calendar based upon individual staff needs and areas of expertise and teachers value these opportunities.
- Expansion of the school's inquiry team enables a focus upon four areas of student performance and thus increases faculty participation in the inquiry process.
- The school strategically utilizes resources based upon student performance data to provide a broad curriculum, including the arts, to address areas identified as in need, such as the progress of English language learners.
- Teachers collect a broad range of data and track student performance which they share with students and families and are beginning to use to inform teaching practice and student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Implement further opportunities to enhance communication and collaboration with all stakeholders in support of a cohesive school community.
- Ensure teachers use data on individual student skill strengths and areas identified for improvement as a tool to inform their planning and implementation of differentiated classroom instruction.
- Implement strategies to embed the identification and continual monitoring and revision of student goals with clearly established benchmarks over time throughout the school year.
- Improve the consistency across classes and grades whereby teachers use established rubrics to both assess and provide constructive feedback to students about their work so they understand what they need to do to improve.
- Employ a strategic overview by school leadership to foster and guide teacher self-reflection of instructional practice and maintain continual assessment of the impact of professional development on teaching, learning and student achievement.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal, administrative team and coaches strategically support teachers in accessing and managing student performance data, primarily in English language arts and math, in a meaningful way. Rather than relying upon a data specialist as in the past, teachers now take greater ownership of their own students' data. They receive training using Acuity interim assessments and the ARIS system, which enables them to access data directly. The administrative team provides color-coded charts identifying students' learning needs to teachers. However, the depth of data analysis and its application to teaching is not yet consistent across all grades and content areas. While teachers collect a wide range of data within their data and assessment binders, there is little analysis of this data to inform strategic grouping of students and to use this information to address their individual needs.

The principal's office displays initial analyses of student performance on English language arts and math State assessments for genders and various ethnic subgroups on a data bulletin board. However, leaders and teachers do not yet incorporate this data into actionable information and embed it into classroom instructional practice.

New family events, such as the readers' and writers' celebration and an upcoming math games night, effectively engage more parents in an exchange of information about their children's learning. Teachers are asking questions, such as, "Is there anything you want me to know about your child?" and this approach opens dialogue with parents about their children's learning needs.

The school is beginning to consider strategies for streamlining the data collection and analysis process. A consultant and the coaches work with teachers to support their use of data to inform their teaching practice. The school uses the "Monitoring for Results" program to track student progress in reading comprehension. However, use of this and other data to purposefully group students based upon their previous learning, skill strengths and areas for improvement is not yet systemically evident in classroom instructional practice.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

Administration, teachers and students concur that the process for student goal setting has just recently begun. Teachers engaged in an introductory goal setting activity in the

previous year whereby they sealed their professional goals in an envelope at the beginning of the year and then reflected upon the degree to which they achieved their goals when they opened the envelope in June. This professional development activity and ongoing discussions on “SMART” (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) goal setting, grade goals and personal learning goals helped to prepare teachers to implement student goal setting at the beginning of this current school year. Students wrote goals and most keep them at the beginning of their notebooks. A typical student goal “I want to learn to read a story,” did not specify the skills required nor the timeframe or action needed to achieve the goal. Some students indicate that they had not looked at their goals since September. A process whereby teachers use student goals based upon data to develop differentiated plans and timeframes for students to reach them is in the early stages of development. The linkage of these goals to teaching and learning is not fully effective but is work in progress.

The school leadership team and staff worked collaboratively on the Comprehensive Educational Plan, handling different sections. Whilst the coaches developed an action plan for reading and writing the magnet coach worked on a section for gifted and talented students since the inquiry team accurately found insufficient challenge for gifted students. Some parents expressed concern that their leadership team collaboration was limited and that they had not yet had an opportunity to review the first draft before submission.

Leaders and teachers communicate high expectations to students, but conversations around goal setting and timeframes with parents has just begun. Positive reinforcement using honor rolls, assemblies, theater trips and pizza parties provide effective incentives to support good attendance. The principal established a student government with elected class representatives that had not previously existed within the school. Students appreciate having a voice in school matters.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

Teachers review and update curriculum maps as a grade conference activity. Teachers also indicate they have input in the selection and recent acquisition of curriculum materials such as Imagination Learning for English language learners, Wilson Reading for special education students and books such as “How to be Cool in Third Grade”. This input enables them to contribute toward curriculum and material selection decision-making. Some teachers post State standards in their classrooms that they occasionally link to student work on bulletin boards, but this practice is not common throughout. Constructive feedback to students is inconsistent. In some cases, teachers give helpful advice to students on how they can improve the work based upon established rubrics. However, others wrote “very nice” or “good”, with no advice on how the student could make a level 3 piece of work into a level 4, for instance.

Upper grade students appreciate choices that are built into their curriculum. They can select their own arts program based upon their own interests. The school offers an enriched curriculum including the arts to all grades. Students enthusiastically danced a choreographed routine to swing music in a recently opened school dance studio. The New York City “Blueprint for the Arts” with good use made of arts rubrics to provide constructive feedback to students. The school plans to continue the work it began in the

previous spring with the next cycle of enrichment clusters, a component of Renzulli's "School Enrichment Model." Students are enthusiastic about their ability to select from a menu of different high interest activities in eight-week cycles. In addition, the "Socratic Seminar" within the gifted classes provides a successful protocol that enables students to engage in a dialogue about open-ended questions to foster critical thinking skills. The school is beginning to gather data on the impact of these programs on student achievement.

Some teachers use predictive and interim assessment data to inform grouping for guided reading and for identifying students for academic intervention services. However, the consistent use of data by teachers in all grades and content areas to strategically group students as a component of their daily lesson planning and teaching is not yet developed. Even where students sit in groups, they are usually not skill-based groups. In most classes, teachers engage students in whole group instruction without providing varying modalities of instruction, or differentiated content materials, around the learning objective.

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.

Teachers value the camaraderie and support that exists among colleagues. They also appreciate constructive suggestions and feedback provided during observations. These include informal, as well as the pre- and post- formal, observation conferences and subsequent reports. A review of sample reports reveals rigorous expectations including a differentiated approach to teaching through the strategic use of data. An out of town retreat provided a refreshing opportunity for teachers to reflect upon and expand their teaching practice outside of the school environment. New and recently qualified teachers get focused support as they transition into the profession and gain experience within the school. Voluntary groups of teachers meet to discuss professional books of interest and enjoy the opportunity to engage in collegial discussion, but the impact that these opportunities are having on student achievement is not yet showing through increased progress.

The inquiry team is expanding to examine four different areas of student progress, thus engaging more faculty in the inquiry process. Several teachers visited other schools, including a school in Chinatown to observe strategies used at a school with a primarily English language learner student population. The school plans to expand these opportunities to observe and share best practices in order to accelerate learning of both staff and students. Teachers indicate they have also recently begun to inter-visit each other.

The school effectively utilizes staff literacy and math coaches to support teachers on six-week cycles. A consultant supports teachers of all grades in the areas of reading, modeling guided reading, read-alouds and running records. Plans include strategic overall professional development to further support teachers with differentiation. Many professional development activities are included in the school's monthly calendar. This indicates the degree to which staff development is embedded into the school's culture. There are concerns among staff regarding the limited timeframe available to implement substantial changes in practice and the clarity of communication around expectations of them.

Teachers, administration, students and parents all acknowledge an atmosphere of mutual respect and smooth daily operations. The implementation of the “Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies” program and associated staff training has effectively improved interventions for students influenced by negative life experiences. A staff committee developed “PS 95 dollars” that are earned by students as a positive reward. Students then use them to purchase incentives. Diverse activities, such as ballroom dancing, a school chorus, a newly formed student government, an after-school “CHAMPS” sports program, and a Shubert Grant all successfully contribute toward the academic and personal growth of students.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

Administration, teachers and students all acknowledge that the use of measurable interim goals and suitable timeframes has just begun. The school instructional team plans to develop a template whereby teachers can interpret interim assessment data to monitor and revise student goals. Currently, the school plans to assess student goals three times per year. The regularity and ease by which goals are monitored and revised on a more frequent basis is not yet developed.

While the school has embedded a diverse professional development program, differentiated classroom teaching practice and regular revision of student learning plans it is not yet systemic.

Administration has fostered structured professional collaborations through faculty book-study groups. The coaches’ support of teachers, in six-weekly cycles, coupled with the modeling of instructional practice, are strategies designed to support more effective teaching practice and improved student learning outcomes. However, teachers do not yet routinely incorporate this practice and as a result, improvement in student performance and progress data is not yet evident.

While the principal articulates a clear vision for continual school improvement, there is dissonance among staff regarding the brevity of the expected timeframe within which improvement is expected. The sense of urgency for the strategic use of data to drive differentiated instruction contributes toward staff concerns regarding the nature and tone of communication of these high expectations.

Parents indicate increased opportunities to share information about their child’s learning through events such as the writing celebration, but some shared concerns regarding the degree of collaboration on school decisions in the context of the school leadership team. While a strong parent teacher association is evident, the degree to which all parents are represented and actively participate in the school community is limited. As a result, the school is exploring ways to get more parents involved in the educational lives of their children.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Gravesend School	△	▷	✓	+
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