

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

Public School 141

Elementary-High School 141

**655 Parkside Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11226**

Principal: Arthur Fusco

Dates of review: April 21 - 23, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Louise Kapner

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 141 is an elementary-high school with 390 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 10. The school population comprises 55% Black, 32% Hispanic, 11% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 72% of the students enrolled and girls account for 28%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 83.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The principal's effective leadership focuses all staff to work collaboratively in order to create a safe environment, where improving achievement and behavior is of high priority. He is very self-reflective and constantly looks at students' outcomes to gauge successes, to plan year-long and for the future. Effective collaborations support the school's efforts to address the needs of the diverse student population. Ann Buckley-Reen's recently implemented yoga program for autistic students, 'Get Ready to Learn', is already positively affecting their concentration in the classroom. Parents are highly appreciative of the welcoming environment, the hard work of staff, and feel knowledgeable about school programs and their children's goals. One parent spoke of how, after speaking with her child's teacher, she learned to manage her child successfully at home.

Teachers are held accountable for high standards. Assistant principals visit classrooms daily and meet bi-monthly with the principal to review their ongoing support for staff. The school uses good tools to record information relative to staff practices. This yields valuable information, although the recording of information is not refined sufficiently enough to ensure easy reference to trends in teachers' instructional strategies. Teachers participate in carefully considered professional development activities, well matched to their needs, and identified staff receive one-on-one support from specialists to enhance their skills. The school provides a standards-based curriculum in all core subjects for both standardized and alternate assessment students. Teachers make learning interesting and students are actively engaged in well-matched activities. Student work is displayed throughout the school. Instructional and grading rubrics provide good guidance, however teachers' comments do not always provide clear signals for next steps to help students improve their work. The school administers, analyzes and records data from an extensive range of standardized and formative assessments. Administrators and staff are thus able to monitor effectively the performance and progress of the school, individuals, by subject and for groups of students across all service categories. Especially significant is the collection of data relating to students' learning styles and behavior. This is used successfully to address individual student's needs to improve learning outcomes. Teachers maintain all data in comprehensive student portfolios and use this information well to inform instruction and to develop learning goals for students' individual education plans. Although teachers continually use results from formative assessments, they do not yet incorporate this information into a student's individual education plan to track ongoing performance and progress towards meeting interim and long-term goals. Students proudly shared their personally developed yearlong goals. However, currently they do not regularly revisit and revise their goals to reflect mastery.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's strong and skilled leadership focuses the entire school community on continuing to raise student achievement, now and in the future.
- The principal and staff work hard to record and use results from meaningful assessments to monitor the performance and progress of students.
- The school's curriculum gives students extensive opportunities to participate in well-matched activities in all core subjects.
- Differentiated and well-planned professional development and effective use of observations ensure continued improvement in classroom practice.
- Teachers, related service providers, specialists and other staff work as a unified team to effectively support students.
- Parents hold the school in high esteem, feel welcomed, and are knowledgeable of school programs.
- High quality collaborations support the academic and personal growth of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teachers' responses to student work to include guiding comments and clear next steps.
- Enhance the student goal setting processes to include effective practices to monitor performance and progress.
- Explore ways to streamline teacher observation data to identify patterns and trends more easily.

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 school has very good processes for collecting and analyzing a wide range of data to monitor the performance and progress across all service categories, by grade, subject, class, cohort and subgroups. This gives a broad understanding of learning outcomes and demonstrates the growth, over the last three years, in the number of students attaining Level 2 or higher on standardized assessments. Internally, the school has created a thorough framework of formative assessments which give a broad range of information relative to students' academic and social needs. Teachers and students often reference Scantron as an effective tool for measuring academic performance and progress, and for its ability to clearly identify individual learning objectives and provide suitable leveled tasks to improve learning. Teachers administer 'The Kaleidoscope Profile' to determine each student's learning and working styles. One student said, "I'm a kinesthetic learner," and spoke proudly of being able to do his work using suitable strategies. The school places a high priority on improving student behavior. Teachers, students and parents each complete a 'Behavioral Emotional Rating Scale' that evaluates behavior. This norm-referenced tool enables teachers to develop suitable interventions. Conversations among staff and between teachers and parents are now taking place centered on strategies to improve behavior. The school is recording a decrease in incidents and fewer students are leaving classrooms. Teachers and paraprofessionals of alternative assessment students use excellent tools to carefully record, on a daily basis, small developmental steps that are used well to inform group and individual instruction.

The school supplements formal reporting at marking periods with informal outreach to individual parents and frequently scheduled workshops. Thus far, this school year, parent participation has increased by 6%. Parents receive their child's individual education program. One parent shared that she sees it as a "bible of what my child will learn and by what techniques. It sets out expectations and on-going performance." Parents of students in the alternate assessment programs receive daily updates and they regularly share relevant information with the school.

Teachers do a very good job in maintaining extensive records of student work. Student portfolios, that follow students yearlong and year-to-year, are a compilation of authentic work and results from assessments. Students reference this information to know how they are doing and understand what they are learning. Teachers use this information effectively to inform instruction, however results from formative assessments are not consistently included in the individual education program as a measurement of student progress towards meeting annual goals and interim learning objectives.

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.

The principal, in consultation with the school leadership team, works collaboratively to analyze student performance and to identify key areas for consideration for all service categories. This leads successfully to the development of measurable interim- and long-term goals for the Comprehensive Education Plan. A mid-year review of alternate assessment students’ progress in developing communication skills showed significant gains and a need for additional resources. A recently implemented program is already increasing student attention span and learning. Parent priorities are also considered to help frame the direction of the school. Their suggestion led to a Scholastic book fair that is providing students opportunities to purchase their own books.

The faculty embraces the collaborative process and meets regularly to set explicit goals in all core subjects. They use this time to look carefully at samples of student work and detailed assessment data. As a result, they develop curriculum and “bring lessons to life” by designing differentiated activities that are well matched to students’ needs, and they develop individual student goals. Academic intervention services are an integral part of the school’s focus on raising student achievement. Carefully planned, targeted instruction supplements classroom practice and student progress is monitored regularly. Grouping is flexible, and modifications to instruction are implemented as appropriate. Classroom teachers and specialists confer regularly to ensure that students’ precise needs are addressed.

Teachers provide students with good guidance on what is expected. Student work on display reflects teachers’ comments and grading against rubrics that are suitable for each service category. However, clear signals for next steps are not yet evident consistently across all sites. Students complete surveys to help them learn about themselves and to understand what the school wants from them. They identify areas that they want to focus on to improve their learning. However, although they know how well they are doing, it is not evident that they are involved in an interim, formal monitoring of their progress.

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 follows a rigorous curriculum and sets learning goals and student outcomes based upon standards-based units of study in each core subject. Pacing calendars and student portfolio checklists clearly focus staff on activities that must be completed each marking period. Curriculum-embedded and formative assessments monitor student performance and progress and a collection of authentic student work is a final product to show mastery. Teachers show great skill in shaping instruction to meet the needs of individual students, reflecting their learning styles, functional needs and academic levels. This results in appropriate and effective, differentiated, multi-sensory learning experiences. In conversations with the students, they often referenced their learning style and spoke of how they enjoy learning through different modalities. One student spoke proudly of his gains in reading because he is now “more focused” by being able to

use the computer to support his learning. Teachers weave art and music activities into their instruction. A grade 8 class was listening to a famous artist's rap song and following along with the printed word on the smartboard and pre-printed handouts. This was an effective introduction to the concept of irony that they were to learn about in Langston Hughes' writings. Students in alternate assessment classes are eager learners. Each student has defined learning objectives in each core subject. They attend to well suited tasks at workstations using the 'Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication – Handicapped Children' (TEACCH) model. Picture symbols are used very effectively to provide guidance and to help build independence. The speech teacher's use of pictures successfully helped a student retell a story. This was in direct support of the goal on his individual education program.

The principal works very closely with his staff and the school leadership team to allocate the budget astutely to address the school's needs across all sites. This ensures that the school provides excellent resources and programs for a diverse student population. Students receive a high level of support in developing good behavior and in their interaction with each other and all adults in the school. Project Genesis, the school's behavior modification program, enables students to learn to make right choices, and to understand the consequences of poor behavior. The school also uses an individual student behavioral rating scale that provides staff with specific information how to respond effectively to each student. As a result, the school has seen a decrease in student fighting and less movement out of classrooms. Students appreciate the help they get and one student pointed out how much he "likes" his teachers who "always talk and try to help me."

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.

Extensive professional development and collaboration with a clear focus on improving student learning characterizes this school. New initiatives are introduced with suitable training and school-based training includes expected outcomes for teachers and students. The coaches provide additional focused support during and after school to staff on "What do you think you need to work on?" Excellent use of learning walks and formal observations, measured against the *Professional Teaching Standards*, enables the principal and assistant principals to evaluate and monitor implementation of best practices, to help set teachers' goals, and to plan further. However, the recording of these visits is not yet refined sufficiently to enable monitoring of trends in teachers' implementation of learned skills. Teachers especially value the opportunity to observe colleagues' intra- and inter-site to enhance their own skills. Staff embrace the work of the inquiry team. Last year teachers focused on students' learning styles and consequently, targeted students showed gains in English language arts and improved behavior. One student was able to complete the entire standardized test because he used newly learned strategies. This year, the work is expanded to five teams across all sites and service categories. Three staff members observe students, identify individual learning needs and develop an intervention plan. As a result, teachers are using effective strategies to improve student learning.

The school values the contribution of specialists and related service providers who work closely with staff to support students' academically and socially. A counselor working individually with a student reinforces classroom lessons on conflict resolution as she helps the student to continue to improve his behavior. The student welcomes the

opportunity to have someone to talk with who can “calm me down.” Highly effective collaborations also respond to students’ academic and personal needs. Through Arts Horizon, alternate assessment students are making pop-up books reflecting what they have learned. A Yale University professor is working with staff around Emotional Literacy to help them understand the needs of their students and how best to relate to them to improve student achievement.

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.

Evaluation, monitoring, reflection and revisions are established features of the school. Assistant principals visit each classroom daily to monitor student engagement, behavior and instruction. They use these visits to observe best practices and to plan next steps for individual or whole staff professional development. The principal holds his assistant principals very accountable for their support of staff. He meets with them at least twice each month to review an extensive checklist of their activities. This information is used effectively to review programs, make suitable modifications to school-wide practices and planning, and identify those individuals requiring further help. Extensive recording of all support enables administrators to monitor and evaluate effectively teachers’ implementation of newly learned strategies.

Ongoing review of student work and results from curriculum-embedded and formative assessments identifies successes and areas for further review. As a result of monitoring alternate assessment students’ progress in language acquisition and communication, the school implemented two additional programs mid-year to support student learning. Students continue to show gains in acquiring communication skills. Teachers of standardized assessment students continually review student work, and confer frequently with them to evaluate their performance. There is a continual sharing of their progress. Staff and students embrace the available information on learning styles as it enables teachers to be “more proactive” in their teaching and students “more productive.” Thus teachers are able to continually modify their instruction to ensure that students are engaged and working on well-matched activities.

The administrators and staff members show high levels of commitment to their work. They use objective data to make astute judgments about the future development of the school to improve student outcomes. The school has recently contracted with ‘Learning Directions’ for support in disaggregating students’ results on formative assessments, relative to grade level standards, in order to help teachers develop suitable lessons. The principal “appreciates the challenge” to identify best practices as he continues to focus on meeting students’ needs and, wherever possible, to move them into less restrictive environments.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Public School 141	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
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							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed