

# **Quality Review**

# **Report**

## **2008-2009**

**The Sheffield School**

**Elementary School 190**

**590 Sheffield Avenue**  
**Brooklyn**  
**NY 11207**

**Principal: Stephaun Hill**

**Dates of review: April 23-24, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Martin Weinstein**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Sheffield School is an elementary school with 312 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 81% Black, 18% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 87.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 91% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

In the words of one teacher, "Our school should not be judged by an overall grade on a Progress Report.... We have made great strides here and we continue to forge ahead with a positive attitude." This teacher's sentiment resonated in conversations with many teachers, students, parents and school leaders. The principal demonstrates an acute awareness of the recent decline in student progress in English language arts and math on summative examinations and she has partnered this year with Learning Directions, an organization that provides data management, analysis and disaggregation of the school's summative and formative data over a continuous cycle. The inquiry process is now embedded on all grade levels as an extension of the school's core inquiry team. Mini-inquiry teams also known as, "Cup Cakes" are present for the kindergarten through grade 5 meetings. This has resulted in a more finite examination of the students failing to achieve greater scale score growth in English language arts and math, and has promoted a refined study of a wider range of students requiring more direct intervention.

The school's professional development and pedagogical strategies are closely aligned to the school's data findings. Student goal setting and interim benchmarking has now taken root in social studies, science and, to a lesser degree, in the arts and physical education. Students know their long-term and short-term goals in English language arts and math and, to some extent, in social studies and science and they are very knowledgeable when discussing their learning needs and the future steps that they have discussed and planned with their teachers. The principal's creation of a report commonly known as "DAN" (Data, Analysis and Next Steps), represents a teacher's efforts in the tracking of student progress as well as differentiated modalities to be embarked on to address a student's needs. School leaders review this report in collegial collaboration with teachers on a monthly basis. An outgrowth of the DAN reporting system is another in-house developed document known as the "Pupil Improvement Educational Plan." This plan contains many of the salient features of the DAN report and it is disseminated to parents on a quarterly basis.

The school heightens student interest by offering SMARTboard technology in all classrooms. Good partnerships with community-based organizations and other agencies provide a wealth of diverse learning experiences in and out of the classroom. The school continues to offer a Core Knowledge curriculum. However, the interdisciplinary and project-based approach, which is the underpinning of this curriculum, is not evident in the majority of classrooms. Additionally, there is an inconsistency in teachers' delivery of differentiated instruction.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has made good strides in collecting, reporting and analyzing a wide range of data to understand student performance and progress.
- School leaders and teachers use collaborative and data-informed processes for planning and goal setting for all grade levels and modify these as necessary, based on identified needs.
- Students and staff benefit from opportunities to use technology and a wide range of textbooks and resources supported by the principal's skillfulness in the management the school's budget and securing of grants.
- The school provides extensive professional development and support for teachers in effective data interpretation, goal setting and improved pedagogical strategies, and encourages self-reflection and revision of instructional approaches.
- Teachers collaborate frequently to examine student work through a rigorous inquiry process, plan together and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas and best practice, driven by an overarching desire to continually improve student outcomes.
- The school's extensive networking with community-based organizations and other agencies and organizations creates a wide range of opportunities for students to grow academically and socially.

### What the school needs to improve

- Build on the established goal setting for and by students in all subjects so they are fully aware of their learning needs and next steps.
- Further refine systems to ensure that the school communicates students' goals and next steps more regularly to parents and guardians.
- Continue to embed cross-curricular studies and project-based learning, including the arts, on all grade levels to promote greater student engagement and the expansion of their knowledge of subject area inter-relationships.
- Improve the consistency in differentiated instruction, based on data, so that lesson planning reflects purposeful groupings, whereby students are challenged through tasks that maximize learning experiences.

## 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.**

As indicated in last year's review, the school has put good systems in place for utilizing diagnostic, predictive assessments as well as teacher evaluations for tracking student progress. Most notably, ARIS, Acuity (inclusive of Instructionally Targeted Assessments, Early childhood literacy assessment system, running records, Developmental Reading Assessment, Fountas and Pinnell) are among the school's wealth of data sources. Benchmark assessments identify student needs early in the school year. The data from State summative assessments and in-house formative assessments in English language arts and math, augmented by Acuity serve as the blueprint for all instructional decisions and student goal information. Teachers' comments on student work contained in portfolios and work folders on all grade levels, and in many core subjects, provide additional data and further support improved student achievement. The school has endeavored to codify these protocols system wide through a consultancy with Learning Directions. As the principal stated, "The charts which they generate for us are so detailed and beneficial for us...we basically tell them what we want and they generate the product for us." These systems enable school leaders and teachers to address the needs of special education students and the small English language learner population. While there is a wide use of data across the school, it is not consistently embedded in all classrooms and in all subject areas. Classrooms are replete with student data binders. As one teacher stated, "These binders are not merely massive volumes of raw data...They contain highly relevant and current information that enable us to know our kids very well."

School leaders are reflective and pursue a collaborative approach to gathering, logging, analysis and use of data in many areas of their work. They rigorously and continuously evaluate all assessment tools and recording systems to determine efficacy. They also demonstrate a keen awareness and understanding of the underlying causal factors of setbacks in student progress. Despite this year's budget restraints, separate classes for boys and girls in grades 3 and 5 have been introduced to "zero in" on the distinct skill disparity of these grade's gender groups as indicated through multiple data sources. The needs of higher performing students and well as students below and on grade level are the focus of targeted assistance by the school's core and "Cup Cake" inquiry teams. A part-time "F" status teacher has also been hired to address the needs of the school's lowest performing students in English language arts and math. Overall attendance for the school has dipped to 87.3% and the principal is increasing incentive award programs to reverse this trend.

**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 school has built upon the effective systems for tracking student progress, which combine teachers’ formative assessments and records, summative scores, computer-generated predictive and diagnostic assessments, as well as the spreadsheet information furnished by the Learning Directions organization. Now teachers work collaboratively with their colleagues, as well as with school leaders, in the monthly development of the DAN report, which delineates the applicable data for a specific student, the analysis of this data and the next steps for the continuation or modification of services. Lending purposefulness and direction to this system, the principal and her assistant principal provide timely feedback to teachers regarding their documentation and then facilitate goal setting accordingly. Teachers work together in many formal and informal venues. The school has developed a highly collaborative environment which is conducive to professional learning. An important outgrowth of these collaborative efforts is the quarterly release of the Pupil Improvement Educational Plan to parents. This plan highlights each student’s current performance in reading (independent reading level and strengths), areas for improvement (skills and strategies), plan of action and what types of support the parent can provide the student at home. However, although parents indicate that they relish having detailed information of this nature, they feel that it would be more advantageous to receive this information on a more frequent basis.

All students have individualized goal sheets in their work folders in the upper grades, which are revised on a monthly basis. There is also evidence of comprehensive goal setting for the early childhood grades. In the kindergarten classrooms, for example, students write goals using their “inventive spelling” on index cards, which are conspicuously displayed on their desks. Student portfolios for all grades contain pertinent teacher comments, aligned with the students’ goals and provide good next steps to help students improve their work. However, students in all grades, for the most part, were not cognizant of their goals in social studies, science and disciplines such as physical education and the arts. In a related vein, the teachers’ review of the students’ progress in the other core subjects lacks the inherent thoroughness found in English language arts and math.

**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.**

The school continues to provide a curriculum that is aligned with State standards. Pacing calendars and curriculum maps are in place for all core subjects. These tools enable teachers to develop challenging activities that accelerate their students’ learning. The school has now fully adopted McGraw-Hill’s Open Court literacy program for grades kindergarten through 5. The principal believes that this research-based program will produce greater success for students on the State examination in English language arts, as it is based on explicit instruction which addresses the five dimensions of reading. Teachers describe this program as correlating more closely with the New York State Core Curriculum and providing more differentiated support to meet all student needs.

Teachers continue to address students' individual learning needs in English language arts through Fountas and Pinnell grouping.

Students in pre-kindergarten through grade 5 receive instruction in dance, music, theatre and visual arts through a standards-based approach vis-à-vis The Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts. However, this curriculum is primarily offered in isolation from the students' core subjects of English language arts, social studies, math and science. As a result, there is limited evidence of project-based learning experiences in these subject-area classrooms. Additionally, classroom observations do not reveal a curriculum that is embedded with interdisciplinary strands. However, students did mention that this year, the school is mounting an original production of a play entitled "The Ruby Slippers" and their participation in this production revealed to them many cross-curricular themes.

The principal demonstrates a shrewd working of her budget to receive maximum returns. When schools are sustaining pervasive losses to instructional programs, personnel and resources, she has been sustaining and augmenting these areas. She has made sure that the United Federation of Teachers Center is maintained and well subsidized, and has added a part-time "F" status teacher to support struggling student learners. Classrooms are "treasure troves" of computer hardware, text and trade books, as well as resources. Future school trips to destinations of educational merit are "in the works" for students and their parents.

**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.**

Professional development for new and experienced staff is the key mechanism for sharing best teaching practice as well as for providing support for improved teacher capacity. Literacy and math coaches, the United Federation of Teachers Teacher Center, mentors, Core Knowledge content specialists, and the administration provide ongoing support through collaborative lesson planning, student data interpretation and goal setting, instructional modeling and intervisitations. Teachers frequently collaborate with one another to examine student work and ensure greater curriculum alignment. However, classroom instruction reveals inconsistency in the practice of differentiated instruction. Although teachers' plans bore evidence of flexible grouping charts and "Next Step" notations pertaining to the pairing of students of varying levels of achievement, there was no evidence, during the course of several of the classroom observations, that they had assigned varied tasks. Notwithstanding, school leaders are working diligently to address this area of concern.

The school's successful core inquiry team has shared its best practices with the entire staff and has expanded the process. Now, a series of mini-inquiry teams, known as a "Cup Cake" teams, have been established for grades kindergarten through 5. Each "Cup Cake" provides services to selected students who are either above, below and on grade level. The students whose scores increase on Acuity and other formative assessments receive cupcakes as a reward. The teachers who are members of the "Cup Cake" inquiry team also receive an incentive. Those whose students show steady improvement will accrue points towards an out-of-state professional development conference.

The school continues its good practice of looking outwards to enrich its curriculum and better meet student needs. Effective use of community-based organizations such as the Center for Architecture and Design, Literature to Life, United Federation of Teachers Reading Buddies, Urban Education Exchange, Family Dynamics, ballroom dancing, Citibank, Puppetry in Practice, Alvin Ailey Dance Company, yoga education, Steele Pan and Farm for City Kids, work with classroom teachers in school and outside the classroom. Unique trips are also an integral component of daily life at the school. A group of students, their parents and staff participated in President Obama's inauguration this past January.

**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.**

In last year's review, the reviewer stated, "Shared clarity in the school's vision to bridge achievement gaps is evident in current school practice and working procedures." Since this review, the vision has taken hold as "systemic" school practice. While there is a more intensive focus on goal setting, consistent goal setting is not yet the norm, although there are measurable interim objectives with corresponding timescales for many core subjects. Now, the school is more acutely aware at an early stage as to whether students are going to meet their goals or if they will meet them sooner than anticipated. Additionally, with the Learning Directions organization "attached at the hip" to the school, they can make revisions to plans and practices in a timelier manner. As one teacher stated, "We make decisive actions to modify student goals, not only with greater ease and expediency, but more accurately." The incorporation of the DAN report has enabled teachers to hone their craft in meeting the needs of their students and monitoring and revising goals accordingly. The Pupil Improvement Educational Plan has served parents and guardians well in providing them with a comprehensive detailing of their children's progress. One parent stated, "I have several children who attend this school and several who graduated several years ago. In the past couple of years, the school does a better job of letting me know about my child and they make me feel comfortable when I question why he is receiving additional services and so on."

The school's leadership and staff speak in well-informed terms about lags in student progress and the limited gains of the students categorized under "Closing the Achievement Gap" on the Progress Report. They share keen insights relating to the need to address the students' scale score growth and through the work of the school's core and "Cup Cake" inquiry teams, the school has made achievement gains, as reflected on the school's recent formative assessments. With data more firmly in place for a wider range of students, the school's pedagogical practice through more consistent differentiation can more closely match the students' diverse learning requirements.

Despite the global economic recession, the principal has utilized her budget effectively and creatively. As a result, the school is well staffed and continues to grow, and materials as well as technology are updated regularly. Although, last year's Progress Report dampened some spirits, the school continues to demonstrate enthusiasm, caring and resourcefulness needed to improve students' academic and psycho-social development.

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: The Sheffield School</b>	△	➤	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<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?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<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?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

## 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, DY0, 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.

<b>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.</b>							
<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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X				
<b>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.</b>							
<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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X				
<b>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.</b>							
<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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>