

# Quality Review Report

## 2008-2009

**Coy L. Cox School**

**Elementary-High School 369**

**383 StateStreet  
Brooklyn  
NY 11217**

**Principal: Rudy Giuliani**

**Dates of review: April 21 – 23, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Mick Megee**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Coy L. Cox is an elementary-high school with 595 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 62% Black, 28% Hispanic, 9% White, 1% American Indian and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 86% and girls account for 14%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 85%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

This District 75 special school is located in Brooklyn in one main site and eight off sites. The students are designated as emotionally handicapped or on the autistic spectrum. All students require a high level of support and specialist services. Class-staff ratios reflect students' needs, at 12:1:1 (students to teacher to paraprofessional), 8:1:1 and 6:1:1. About half the students follow alternate assessment programs.

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal sets out very clearly the school's guiding mission to do the very best for the students and "to get them out of special education if at all possible". As one parent put it, "The principal has shown us that if we expect more of our children, they expect more of themselves." The high proportion of students who are successfully returned to inclusive and mainstream environments indicates the school's success.

All staff, including the support services, work with great care and sensitivity as a team. Wherever a student looks like they are getting off track, then immediate steps are taken to remedy the situation as quickly as possible. The school has made a good start in bringing in robust systems and processes for collecting, analyzing and reviewing data. The school has not yet included data from all core subjects in these processes, and the data does not yet capture the relative performance of the different subgroups within the school.

Most teachers use the available data well in planning and carrying out instruction, although a few teachers are not quite so skilful and pitch activities at the wrong level, leaving some students behind or insufficiently challenging others. The administration seeks assiduously to maintain high quality teaching for all students through formal and informal observations, and by ensuring that teachers receive good quality professional development in order to improve. Teachers and students say that they love working together in a school where they feel cherished and valued. Parents speak highly of the school, and feel that they have a strong partnership with frequent, positive two-way communication. The school formally and proficiently measures its success against the goals it sets. Most goals are 'smart', but some goals do not contain set time limits for achievement, and this makes them less useful.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school is very successful in its mission to do the very best for all the students and to return as many of them as possible quickly to mainstream.
- The principal skillfully communicates his clear vision for high personal and academic achievement.
- All members of faculty, including the support services, respond rapidly and effectively as a team to ensure that no individual student is left behind.
- The administration provides effective support and guidance to all teachers and ensures there is good teamwork, fruitful inquiry and a wide range of good professional development.
- Teachers' skilful student management means that classrooms are calm and respectful places of learning where students feel safe and secure.
- Parents appreciate the frequent communication and strong relationships they have with the school.

### What the school needs to improve

- Build on the good work already begun in data collection, analysis, utilization and review to include all core subject areas.
- Analyze more thoroughly the performance of the different subgroups within the school to ensure there is no hidden underachievement.
- Ensure there are suitable timeframes attached to all interim and final goals in all plans so that success can be easily measured and involve all students in assessing their own progress wherever appropriate.
- Develop greater consistency in the way that teachers use communication strategies and plan activities to meet the range of needs within each class so that there is an appropriate level of challenge for individual students.

## Part 3: Main Findings

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

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

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school collects data and tracks students' performance in English language arts, math, and science, using a good variety of assessment tools including Brigance Inventories, ECLAS2 and Acuity. The school does not yet collect and analyze data for all of the core subject areas. The school has good tools that it uses well to assess, track and review the behavior and life skills of the students. These include Functional Behavior Assessments and SWIS. This year the administration has created a new system of professional data binders that makes it easier for teachers to create a picture of individual students' needs so that there is a clear focus for planning instruction.

Staff consistently monitor the progress that individual students make in key content areas, behavior and functional life skills through individual education plans (IEPs). Within the small class groups, staff get to know the students very well, and take every care that no student gets off track or falls behind. The school monitors the progress of some subgroups of students who share similar needs, but this monitoring does not yet extend to all relevant groups in all content areas. This means that there could be some underachievement that the school has not yet recognized or addressed.

The school evaluates IEPs four times a year alongside the parents. This gives families a broad understanding of what students are working on and what they are expecting to achieve over the next period, although not yet in all subjects. In addition to these formal processes, parents receive very frequent, sometimes daily, updates on how well their children are doing. Parents really value the lengths to which staff go in order to welcome them in the school and keep them fully informed about their child's progress. They especially appreciate this where the students' communication difficulties mean they are unable to express directly their feelings about the day or life at the school in general. As one parent said, "This administration is very open to you coming in and in finding out how best they can help you."

The school keeps a close watch on attendance, and has a good range of measures to ensure that any absence is followed up quickly. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance remains lower than the school would like, although its figures compare favorably with similar schools.

**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.**

School leaders and faculty consistently use their data to understand each student’s next steps in learning and to set measurable learning goals for individual students and for some groups in English language arts, math, science and functional life skills. Learning goals are not yet set or reviewed in all other core subject areas. Teachers skillfully reinforce individual goals within lessons. For the most part, the goals contain detailed criteria so that success can be easily assessed. However, some goals do not have sufficiently specific timeframes, so that it is difficult to know when the student is able to move on to the next level.

Students are fully involved in reviewing their own behavioral intervention plans and refer frequently to their personal behavior goals. The school is increasingly involving students in the self-assessment of their own academic goals, and this means that they have a clearer understanding of what they need to do next. The school does not yet offer this opportunity to all students where this would be appropriate.

The principal successfully promotes a ‘can do’ culture within the school and faculty’s expectations of success are high. These expectations are communicated clearly to students and their families. Parents say that they are often amazed by how much the school has helped their children to achieve. One typical parent’s comment was, “When my daughter arrived here she was very shy and wouldn’t look anybody in the eye. She’s come a long, long way in a short time. She’s just joined the girl scouts.” When asked what they would like to become in later life, students demonstrate their high expectations when they cite a range of high-status professional occupations such as school counselor, doctor and even a judge. All members of the school community are included in formulating and monitoring the school-wide strategic goals set out in the Comprehensive Educational Plan.

**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**

There is a clear sense of trust, respect and support for all within the school community. Classrooms are well organized, and lessons are usually calm and peaceful because of the effective use of rewards and sanctions. There are evident good relationships between staff and students and between students themselves. Staff provide good role models of how to work well together as a team.

Most lesson activities are well matched to the wide range of needs in each class and, as a result, most students show interest and engagement in their learning. However, some teachers are less skilful than others and the work set may be too challenging or too easy for some students. Where this happens, lower-performing students may be left behind or higher-performing students may finish their work early and become bored. Staff make

a consistent effort to make their meanings clear through the use of symbols, especially for students with communication difficulties. However, not all teachers use signing as a matter of routine to provide students with much-needed visual communication cues. This may mean that some students find it difficult to understand what is being asked of them.

The school provides a good range of subjects that the students find stimulating and which addresses the students' goals and objectives. The school budget is closely aligned with the goals in the Comprehensive Educational Plan and fully supports the school's instructional initiatives. Moreover, the administration is on a constant lookout for additional activities which the students will enjoy and that will assist their learning. An example of this is the effective use of yoga and movement therapies to engage the students and to increase their participation in learning as well as to promote their physical well-being. Another example is the TouchMath program for students with autism. The school's data is demonstrating the benefit and good value for money obtained through such programs by their very positive impact on student achievement. The school no longer provides an after-school program which students and their families justifiably say is a big loss.

**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, especially those new to the profession or new to the school, greatly value the support they receive from the administration. The school ensures that every new teacher has a teacher-trainer to guide them so that they can improve the quality of instruction as rapidly as possible. Every teacher assesses their own performance each year utilizing the professional teaching standards to ensure that they are focused on creating an effective classroom environment and engaging the students in their learning.

Administrators regularly conduct formal and informal observations, as well as walkthroughs, using the same standards in order to monitor the quality of teaching rigorously. Teachers receive written feedback on their performance. While the feedback is generally accurate and helpful, areas for improvement are not always set out with sufficient detail so that they can be re-assessed easily at a subsequent observation visit.

The school has recently introduced individual profession development plans, that set out clearly each teacher's improvement points for the year, as well as the professional development to be delivered that will enable the improvement to take place. There is a good range of opportunities for professional development, and the administration keeps a sharp eye open for innovative approaches that will benefit the students. Teachers participate frequently in professional collaborations such as peer observations and intervisitations. New teachers in particular find this very helpful in improving their practice. Teachers meet together every month at grade level to discuss and interpret academic and behavior data, although not all core subjects are yet covered in these discussions.

There is a strong culture of collaboration between teachers and staff from the designated services, with a good interchange of information for the benefit of the students. The

speech teachers provide a great deal of high quality professional development. There are regular interdisciplinary conferences that make decisions about students' placement in more inclusive, less restricted environments. The school's two inquiry teams are providing the staff with powerful models of how action research can dramatically improve the achievement of small groups of students in specific areas. For example, one team has successfully improved the reading levels of six students by using phonics-based approaches. One of the target students said that he had found the teaching transformational. He has dropped his previously defiant, oppositional attitude and is now compliant, well behaved and his self-esteem has been restored. The school fosters good relationships with outside agencies and local businesses, for example, to provide students with opportunities for work-based learning.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The processes of self-evaluation and reflection are well embedded in the culture of the school. School leaders and faculty meet once a month to review data, adjust timeframes where required and to discuss next steps for all students. The school leaders, through the weekly cabinet meetings, monitor the curriculum on an interim basis to ensure that it is aligned with the results of the teachers' assessments and students' IEP goals. Many goals, including school-wide and grade goals, have interim benchmarks that allows the administration to detect at an early stage whether the school is likely to be successful. A few plans, such as the professional development plan, do not yet have these necessary benchmarks and timeframes. Some of the school's program goals, such as those related to improving the curriculum, are not yet evaluated fully to see whether they have had a positive impact upon student achievement. Interim and final goals are set in English language arts, math, science and functional life skills but not yet in all other content areas which limits the school's ability to gauge effectiveness across every aspect of learning.

The principal capitalizes on individual strengths and distributes leadership right through the organization. All members of staff at every level are constantly encouraged to bring forward ideas and innovation. Everyone in the school community knows and shares the principal's vision that all students will be taught in the least restrictive environment, with the aim to include as many as possible fully in mainstream. As one parent put it, "This program tries its hardest to integrate the kids, to make sure that they are not hidden away." The Comprehensive Educational Plan articulates this vision very clearly. The school has a rich culture of self-improvement and the administrators seek out and welcome any external critiques, such as the Quality Review and Learning Environment Survey. They recognize that such critiques will give them a clearer understanding of what needs to be improved and help them enhance what they offer to students and their families. The school responds very quickly and robustly if staff detect any underachievement and will leave no stone unturned in looking for appropriate remedial strategies. A typical parent's comment was, "This school is very flexible and very interested in you. If a kid's not getting something one way, they're always willing to try something else."

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Coy L Cox</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+
<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>	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?			<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>	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?		<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, 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>	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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X	

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed