

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Public School 771

Elementary – High School 771

**1075 Oceanview Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11235**

Principal: Sharon Meyers - Izzo

Dates of review: April 21 – 23, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Sue Alton

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 771 is an elementary-high school with 394 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 46% Black, 15% Hispanic, 33% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 76% of the students enrolled and girls account for 24%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 89.7%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school is a special education school situated on six sites in Brooklyn and serves students with a variety of disabilities, including emotional difficulties, mental retardation, autism, multiple handicaps and deafness.

The principal of 18 years retires in June. A new principal will be appointed in May and there will be a short handover period until the end of the semester.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

“The people who’ve come into my child’s life at this school have made such an impression on me and my family to help my child function in society,” is a view shared by parents as they discuss the impact of the school on their children. The school is very successful in communicating with families to support learning in the home environment and students and families are effectively involved in individual goal setting processes. Good and consistent strategies ensure good student behavior, resulting in a calm atmosphere and an ethos of trust and respect.

The school collects and maintains a good range of data about the performance of individual students and classes, using this to review provision. Teamwork is very strong across all six sites, with agencies and partners. This results in accurate sharing of data about the progress of individual students and classes and swift identification of individual needs and services to meet these. However, although teachers maintain a good range of data, they do not use it consistently to plan differentiated instruction for groups of students and opportunities for students to be involved in group-activities to explore concepts and reinforce learning are limited. The vision to reduce services and/or move to inclusion is realistic goals for an increasing number of students because of the effective tracking of individual progress.

The school uses data to inform budgetary decisions, for example the purchase of a range of technology resources. However, systems to evaluate the impact of these decisions on student achievement are limited, and there was very little use of technology during the review. The identification of specific and measurable long-term and short-term goals and timeframes for meeting them varies in school plans. This means that the review and evaluation process is less rigorous than it could be and progress against goals difficult to quantify. Teachers are not encouraged to use their knowledge to be systematically involved in whole school goal setting, to ensure these goals and outcomes are always focused on school based knowledge, rather than information outside the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is very effective in collecting and using a wide range of data about the performance of individual students.
- Frequent opportunities for all staff to meet supports the accurate identification of individual student needs and review of service provision to support planning.
- All staff work well as a cohesive team across sites and services, encouraging reflection and good information sharing to support student needs and goals.
- High expectations of behavior and embedded systems ensure all students know what is expected of them, resulting in a calm environment, conducive to learning.
- Students enjoy coming to school, feel safe and teachers encourage them to be involved in the goal setting process.
- Frequent and systematic communication with families ensures that parents receive information about their child's goals, supporting them to reinforce learning at home.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure all teachers use data consistently to deliver differentiated instruction and an engaging curriculum to support all students in meeting their goals.
- Ensure all plans and review processes focus on student outcomes, include specific measurable long-term and short-term goals and have timeframes for achievement, based on data analysis to support evaluation of progress.
- Revise systems to enable the whole school community to be more systematically involved in school improvement planning and review including goal setting.
- Review processes to evaluate the impact of new programs and resources, including technology, on learning for individuals and groups of students, to support planning.

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.

Good systems to collect and maintain a wide range of data on individual students across all subjects ensures all staff know individual student progress and needs. The employment of a data specialist and increased use of data programs supports this process well. Teachers maintain a record of the number of students for whom provision decreases over the year, to assess the impact of services to inform future decisions about programs and services for students and to organize classes. When new students enter the school, a range of staff are swiftly involved in reviewing data and making further assessments to ensure new students are immediately provided with the services and support they need. This results in the quick and effective integration of new students into the school.

Effective disaggregation of data by disability facilitates the review of provision for specific classes. For example, on reviewing the progress of one class, there was a decision to move some students to a different type of provision. Data shows that this resulted in improved progress for these students. The focus of the Inquiry Team is to analyze data further by ethnicity and gender, which is a continuing focus from the last review. Earlier analysis of the progress of different ethnic groups and gender resulted in the purchase of resources to appeal to boys and special activities for girls. However, the school does not systematically review the impact of these activities on student progress.

Very effective systems ensure good and frequent communication with families about student needs and goals and students are encouraged to be part of the goal setting process. Parents value the advice and guidance they receive to enable them to help their children at home. One parent described the dedication of a teacher who phoned her each night. As one parent said, "There is no separation between my house and school. The same values and skills are being reinforced."

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.

Goal setting focuses on individual students. Within classes, teachers differentiate work to meet the needs of individuals, type of disability and programs in use. The use of data to provide differentiated instruction within classes for groups of students is inconsistent, resulting in missed opportunities for students to reinforce and extend their learning through discussion.

Good and frequent collaboration of the whole staff team ensures staff members have up-to-date information on individual progress and frequent opportunities to review services

and plan, which may lead to changes in provision. The success of this process is evident in the number of students who move to inclusion or receive reduced services. Opportunities for staff and parents to be involved in whole school decision making are limited, although once the principal has decided the goals, staff are invited to discuss how these can be achieved. Parents are unaware of school goals and say they are not involved in the process. Comprehensive Educational Plan goals are not always specific in terms of measurable outcomes for students. The plan does not sufficiently focus on school data and needs, for example, it expresses long-term goals in terms of a percentage, rather than a measurable outcome. This percentage increase is the same for all goals, based on outside advice, rather than the school's own knowledge of its students and their need, through data analysis.

The school reviews Individual Education Plans annually, and sets long-term goals across curriculum areas and in functional life skills. Long-term goals are often too broad, which makes achievement of them difficult to assess. Short-term goals are more specific and time measured linked to marking periods, although plans do not clearly specify these. A review of Individual Education Plans reveals that the school does not systematically update student progress towards short-term goals. However, teachers' assessment binders contain detailed evaluations and indicate goals are broken down further to assist planning of instruction.

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 organizes classes through effective use of data to support the wide range of student needs. Teachers differentiate provision by the type of class and the student: adult ratio within that class. The school follows the State curriculum, and establishes internal benchmarks for literacy in response to the particular needs of students. Teachers select various programs to support specific needs and the focus on life skills encourages students to learn those skills they need for independent living. Monthly themes encourage the reinforcement of skills across the curriculum.

Differentiated instruction within classes is inconsistent, other than the focus on individual learning and remains an improvement area from the last review. Opportunities for students to interact with each other, through group tasks are limited. Although administration stresses the importance of experiential learning, there was little evidence of this during the review. Displays in classrooms vary in quality, providing limited opportunities to reinforce learning and stimulate discussion. However, in one class, students were animated and showed good scientific understanding as they described the growth of their plants. Students say they enjoy opportunities to be involved in physical education, art and music, which effectively supports their all round development and learning.

Administration utilizes the budget to support school needs, for example increasing the range of technology available for student use. However, they do not review the impact of these actions on instruction and student learning systematically. During the review, there were only a few opportunities to observe use of this new technology.

The school carefully monitors attendance and checks absences quickly. However, a number of students have significant medical needs, resulting in absence for medical appointments or illness, which affects the overall attendance figure.

Very good relationships, based on trust and clear and consistent expectations of behavior results in the calm working environment. Students feel safe; respect each other, show tolerance and an understanding of each other's needs. One parent observed behavior is good, "Because staff take responsibility for all students and care about each and every one of them, not just their class."

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.

Administration provides regular feedback and support to teachers, encouraging them to reflect on their practice and improve instruction. However, this feedback does not always specifically relate to student achievement. The school effectively supports and challenges new teachers through a range of coordinated processes, including mentoring and specific professional development. Teachers value the wide range of professional development opportunities and are proactive in identifying their needs in individualized professional development plans. They appreciate the constant push from administration to help them improve their instruction and one teacher explained, "The principal extracts the mediocrity in us and pushes us to excellence."

Last year, data analysis led the Inquiry Team to focus very effectively on level 1 students unable to function at a basic level in the alternative assessment classes. Leaders communicated the strategies and findings systematically across all sites and staff express enthusiasm for the way the team has helped them to analyze data further. One teacher said, "Before, I had the data, but now I understand how to use it." The significant impact of this work is there are no longer any Level 1 students and one student from the group moved to inclusion. The focus for the Inquiry Team, this year, is to disaggregate data further to analyze trends and the progress of different groups within the school.

The very good teamwork between all teachers, paraprofessionals and service providers ensures all staff participate in frequent discussions about students, which contributes to an all round picture of individual student progress and needs. The focus on "push in" services ensures minimal disruption to students and good opportunities for professionals to work closely together to support student needs. Very good links with the other school within the building supports opportunities for students to be included in general education. Rigorous preparation and planning ensures students succeed in this environment, gaining the confidence to transfer to other general education settings, when the time comes. As a result, an increasing number of students transfer to inclusion each year.

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 Comprehensive Educational Plan identifies long-term goals that that leaders evaluate at regular intervals. These goals do not always focus on student outcomes. Although goals are measurable in terms of percentages, sometimes these are not specific because there is no clarity of what this percentage will look like in terms of

progress from baseline. The Comprehensive Educational Plan does not identify short-term goals. Thus, evaluation is often a backward glance of progress to date, rather than a rigorous process of review and evaluation leading to revision of plans and goals. The school's self-evaluation contains some evaluation of impact but in the main, it is too descriptive, for example, one section provides detailed information of student programs rather than the impact these have on student achievement.

The whole school community respects the principal. She uses data effectively to make decisions relating to student groupings and to identify school needs and strategies to address these needs. She has very precise and firm expectations of her staff in following school procedures to ensure these are systematic across the six sites. However, despite this, differentiated instruction is inconsistent across classes. The principal maintains an overview of the range of school plans, assessments and goals. She uses the budget skillfully to create opportunities for all staff to work together closely to evaluate the range of plans and activities and student progress. Teachers use these opportunities well to check that students are on track to meet their individual goals. However, there is no formal process to enable teachers to contribute to the setting of whole school goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan and in the school self-evaluation process.

The school constantly reinforces its high expectations of all students and the vision to support as many as possible to receive reduced services and transfer to a general education school. One student said, "We get a second chance here to go back to General Ed. I didn't know about inclusion until I came here and when the principal told me about it, that was my goal and now I've achieved it."

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Public School 771	△	➤	✓	+
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