



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Bays Water School

Elementary School 104

26-01 Mott Avenue

Queens

NY 11691

Principal: Katie Grady

Dates of review: November 17 - 18, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Veronica Yurcik

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Bays Water School is an elementary school with 631 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 69% Black, 24% Hispanic, 2% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 91.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 79% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Within her short tenure, the principal has made significant strides in working with all members of the school community, thus gaining their trust and respect. Her ability to be highly reflective and set clear expectations for the entire school community has translated into a new vision for academic rigor. This is characterized by a structured curriculum and increased reflection and communication among all constituents. Nevertheless, the school has not been fully successful in meeting performance and progress targets.

The principal has used data effectively to make strategic curriculum, staffing, purchasing and programming decisions to address learning needs. In response to a high level of disruptive behavior, a committee-designed school-wide behavior modification plan has resulted in improved student behavior and attitudes. This has contributed to a positive school tone this year, which is recognized and appreciated by students, parents and teachers alike. Parents value the detailed performance information, which is sent home regularly. They acknowledge that these reports keep them well informed and enable them to be engaged in a two-way conversation to better assist their children.

Multiple opportunities for teacher leadership in many school committees have promoted improved teacher skills. Scheduling common meeting times and planned intervisitations have created many occasions for looking at students' work and collaborative sharing of practice, focusing on effective strategies to improve student performance. However, consistency within grades and among grades in implementing strategies and key learning skills remains an area for improvement. The school's present professional development is not sufficient to support teachers in this area. Teachers consistently use assessment rubrics school-wide to convey learning signals to students, but these rubrics are not written in student-centered language. As a result, students cannot accurately self-assess and thus identify their next steps in learning.

The school carefully and strategically analyzes and synthesizes information from a range of data sources and has created an extensive data collection system. However, current data systems are cumbersome. The school recognizes the need to streamline its matrixes to enable staff to use the information effectively to record and monitor student performance. The school does a competent job in using quantitative and qualitative interim and long-term benchmark goals in most core subjects. Investigation of underlying causes for lack of performance and identification of specific performance indicators is not consistent. The school, however, has begun to address this in the work of its Inquiry Team and by inquiry study with target study groups in every classroom.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school effectively analyzes all data, including its Learning Environment Survey, Progress Report, and Quality Review, to better understand student learning needs and to inform action to address recommendations.
- School leaders and teachers foster better discipline and an improved school tone by consistent implementation of a committee-designed, positive, school-wide behavior modification/motivation program.
- The school provides regular, written communication informing parents and students of on-going performance and progress to raise student achievement.
- The principal creates multiple opportunities for teacher leadership, resulting in collaborative inquiry, intervisitations and shared decision-making that enhance teachers' skills.
- The principal is highly reflective and has made her expectations clear, supporting these with well-focused organizational decisions on staffing and resource management to improve student progress and performance.
- The principal and the whole school community share the vision for the future development of the school, and are deeply committed to enabling all students to achieve as highly as possible.

What the school needs to improve

- Streamline key information from the schools' varied data-collection processes to create a simpler, more manageable system that will allow teachers to interpret data more easily.
- Revise classroom assessment rubrics to reflect student-centered language in order to motivate and convey clear expectations, and to promote accurate student self-evaluation.
- Build on the schools' goal-setting processes to better identify specific performance indicators to ensure that students understand what they need to do next to achieve their goals.
- Provide professional development to improve consistency of instructional strategies within and across grades to improve the key learning skills and better meet the needs of all 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 has developed comprehensive data collection systems to track individual, class, grade, subject and school-wide trends. The data specialist plays a key role in supporting the principal to tabulate and computerize this data and has developed detailed matrixes to record the information effectively. The school's thoughtful analysis of subgroup data identified that female students surpassed male students' performance as they move up in grade. To address this they purchased novels and non-fiction books of particular interest to boys to motivate them as readers. The school examines data trends in special education classes, and as a result implemented the Foundations program for all special education students to support mastery of phonemic skills. The school reviews its wide range of data monthly. However, there is variation in recording, and data summaries are not always user friendly for quick tracking of individual needs to form student groups. The school has recognized this concern and is working toward refining its data tools. Teachers have extensive recording systems to monitor their students' performance and progress in most core subjects. They use this information conscientiously to know how individuals and groups of students are doing and to plan next steps.

The school does an efficient job in providing students and parents with feedback regularly. However, feedback is not always specific enough to guide students to the next levels of performance. Parents appreciate the monthly progress reports and the opportunity to respond to teachers. As one parent said, "I really enjoy it because it tells you if your child is going backward or forward. It is a really good thing."

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 implements a core knowledge curriculum, which specifies important knowledge in language arts, history and geography, math, science, and the fine arts for each grade. The school publishes and makes diligent use of a comprehensive list of quantitative and qualitative interim and long-term grade benchmark goals for this curriculum, as well as for English language arts and math, to focus instruction and improve student outcomes. Staff members are familiar with these goals and rely on goal matrixes in planning instruction, which has contributed to a more consistent implementation of the curriculum. Teachers use periodic assessments judiciously to inform differentiated instruction and explain that there is "fluidity in our groups based on our observations and data." Although there are many established monthly checks after units of study, reading benchmark monitoring occurs only three times a year. The

school sets goals of more than one year's progress for students below grade level, but goals for students on and above grade level are not as rigorous.

The principal meets monthly with faculty members to review progress toward school goals. Professional learning, however, does not focus on identifying specific performance indicators, which would enhance precise assessment and define more clearly next steps for achieving the desired learning outcomes. Most students are able to explain their goals in several content areas; however, they are not always able to articulate next actions for achievement of those goals.

The school conveys high expectations effectively to students and their parents through frequent verbal and written communication. Improved student attendance is evidence of the school's success in setting and sharing these expectations. Parents are very pleased with the school's communication, workshops and welcoming reception, but express interest in more outreach opportunities to meet with teachers. Teachers encourage student excellence by posting quality student work with evaluative comments in attractive displays throughout classrooms and school hallways. Assessment rubrics, however, are better suited to adult interpretation than student self-assessment.

School leaders and faculty carefully evaluate data from the Progress Report, Learning Environment Survey and Quality Review, as well as from attendance and testing data, and parent input. They use this information to reflect on current critical needs in the writing of the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan in order to ensure that goals are matched to student needs and the school's desired outcomes.

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 principal is highly self-reflective and makes expectations clear, setting a high standard of accountability. She has made many wise strategic organizational decisions to support organizational and instructional changes toward raising student achievement. Data analysis resulted in program changes in early childhood phonics instruction, upper grade reading and math, and goal setting in reading across the grades. In addition, the school made significant changes in second grade instruction after examining carefully the reasons behind the poor performance of their third graders in reading. As a result, the principal scheduled curriculum discussion between grades 2 and 3, which raised the rigor of instructional practices in grade 2.

The school focuses strongly on organizing data to make informed curriculum and strategic instructional decisions to increase learning and close the achievement gap. It has made tactical staffing changes, for example, which have had a positive impact on improving the school culture and raising academic expectations. A conflict-resolution teacher and an F-status guidance counselor facilitate the school's new behavior plan, developed in response to concerns expressed in the school's Learning Environment Survey. This, coupled with their on-going support to students and their families, and the faculty's genuine concern for their students, has resulted in a better learning environment and a more positive school climate. A new math coach is helping teachers implement the school's recently instituted math program, which was initiated in the upper grades due to their declining math performance and progress. A second assistant

principal was hired this year because of her strong literacy, assessment, data and technology skills.

Recognizing the need for students to improve their competence in language and vocabulary development and to engage in more meaningful learning, the school adopted an interdisciplinary core knowledge curriculum aligned with State standards. Numerous opportunities within the core curriculum support enrichment, through visual and performing arts learning and interesting field trips. In addition, the school has a full-time music teacher, and partnerships with community-based organizations to provide after-school activities such as African drumming, theater, and arts and crafts to further enhance this program. To better meet the needs of struggling learners and target enrichment for those students who excel, the school instituted tiered assignments in core curriculum this year. This enables students to study the same topic areas but have differentiated work that supports their individual learning needs and ability to work independently. The development of tiered assignments remains a work in progress and an area of continued professional development. The school is now pursuing the use of essential questions as a strategy to make their core curriculum program more rigorous in developing critical thinking and applied learning skills.

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.

The school provides numerous activities that promote and help embed successful distributive leadership and increased accountability through shared professional learning and action to improve student learning. School supervisors structure professional collaborations effectively in weekly grade meetings, one-on-one coaching sessions, planned intervisitations to observe model lessons, weekly workshops for new teachers and monthly conferences. These enable on-going critical examination of professional practice, student work and data analysis. Teachers' recognition of the value of these collaborative activities in improving both their own and their students' skills has led to increased informal networking among teachers and grades

The school's Inquiry Team members demonstrate genuine concern for their students and a sincere interest in the inquiry process. They originally focused on students with academic needs at Levels 1 and 2. Over 85% of these students made a year's growth or more, with several students demonstrating high gains of a year and a half to two year's growth. This year, in addition to the core Inquiry Team's study, every classroom teacher has identified four students for their own inquiry study. Teaming with grade level colleagues, they meet weekly to review students' work, determine needed skills and identify strategies to help those students make progress. This new initiative supports the school's efforts to improve school-wide communication regarding inquiry work and institute systemic changes toward improving learning and student outcomes.

Every teacher submits yearly goals, which supervisors review and use in evaluating teacher performance. Teacher plans, however, lack specific measurable interim goals. While there are no written interim teacher performance benchmarks, supervisors and coaches do provide on-going professional support. The core knowledge specialist teacher provides professional development in effectual data-driven instruction. Supervisors give continual and helpful feedback through email communication and visit summaries called "snapshots". Teachers state that the snapshots "help keep us on track" and "make you really think about what direction you are going in – everything is

connected.” A planned year-long professional development calendar lists activities for key skills/needs aligned to the school calendar and assessment schedules. However, there is not an overall professional development plan in place to address the lack of consistency in instructional strategies within and across grades. As a result, teachers are not all equally effective at helping students to develop the key learning skills..

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.

Newly established committees and data collection systems enable administration and faculty to evaluate critically conditions of student learning and support systems. They have led to more reflective practice and changes within the school year to address specific concerns. Weak performance in upper grade English language arts prompted school-wide professional development to develop teachers’ expertise in reading skills instruction and understanding the elements of a balanced literacy program. Declining scores in upper grade math prompted research and the initiation of a new math program. In response to poor science performance, the principal assigned several science cluster teachers to ensure comprehensive science instruction to improve student performance. This decision also gave classroom teachers more time to better prepare core curriculum units.

The school community recognizes its challenges. It has steadfastly addressed recommendations from past Quality Reviews with thoughtfulness and thoroughness, resulting in both formal and informal structures to support increased student learning. The initiation of data collection systems has sharpened the focus on the achievement of individual students and raised the level of accountability building-wide. There is a shared vision and commitment to raising student achievement. The staff and parents believe in their principal and acknowledge the value of open communication. The UFT (United Federation of Teachers) representative explained, “There is an open forum in this school which is a plus.” This is illustrated by the collegiality displayed among staff members. Teachers demonstrate an understanding and commitment to common goals to improve learning and are receptive to feedback and learning from each other.

Flexibility in responding to student performance enables on-going instructional adjustments. Some recent program changes in adapting to emerging needs include moving the school’s 37.5 minute academic intervention services program to the morning, since these students are more focused at the beginning of the day. Similarly, the school assigned students in the academic Saturday program according to needed skill areas, rather than grade level, to ensure targeted differentiation of instruction. In particular, scheduled benchmark checks, periodic assessment results, unit checks and conference notes inform teacher decision making. Teachers use these tools to modify instruction and refer students for additional support services when necessary. School-wide systems are in place to regularly examine individual student data and set interim goals, though this is not the case for all school plans. However, there is a continuous focus on school improvement and on the development of systems to evaluate success.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Bays Water School	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, 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