

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Bay School

Elementary-Middle School 105

**420 Beach 51 Street
Queens
NY 11691**

Principal: Laurie Shapiro

Dates of review: October 28-29, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Michael Clifford

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Bay School is an elementary-middle school with 888 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 66% Black, 30% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 90.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 80% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Bay School is orderly and well organized through the combined efforts of dedicated school leaders and an energized staff. The school is considered to be an oasis of safety set in a neighborhood beset with challenges.

Parents are grateful for the emphasis on high expectations for learning and for the safe environment that is established for their children. They make note of the significant positive changes that have occurred over the past decade as the school moved to an elementary-middle configuration. They recognize that the school reaches out to them to be essential partners in the education of their children and appreciate that the school honors their efforts and support. For example, parents themselves get award certificates for getting their children to school on time every day. They express the idea that it is up to them to set an example for their children as "it is their community and their responsibility." In referring to the principal as "the head mom" they truly capture the family atmosphere that pervades the school.

The expansion of the Core Knowledge program throughout the entire elementary grades promotes a consistent interdisciplinary thematic approach in which all core subject areas contribute to the exploration of a big idea. This philosophy will be expanded into the middle school next year so that there will be a seamless curricular methodology across all grades. Teachers demonstrate some examples of differentiated instruction at each grade level and across subject areas, but the school has not yet reached the point where every teacher is putting these strategies into practice on a consistent basis.

The school has made strides in developing a more systematic approach to collecting and organizing data through their use of Learning Directions reports. While just recently instituted, this tool already provides a clear structure for thorough data analysis at the class, grade, and school-wide levels. It is, however, too soon to gauge its impact on improving the learning outcomes and meeting the needs of all sub-groups of students. At the classroom level, teachers continue to collect a wide range of data in assessment binders, and collections of student work folders. These are not, as yet, organized in a standardized systematic way which allows teachers consistently to set short- and long-term goals and check progress in the attainment of those goals.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principals demonstrate strong leadership which contributes to a well-run school in which high expectations are embraced by the entire school community.
- Parents express appreciation for the hard work the school has done to ensure a safe environment in which the focus is on student learning.
- The collaborative team spirit demonstrated by staff leads to sharing of best practices, a willingness to distribute expertise to new teachers, and an appreciation for joint efforts to improve the school.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about the expansion of the Core Knowledge curriculum at the elementary level which promotes a rich, engaging, interdisciplinary theme approach to learning.
- Regular “Data Chatta” meetings at each grade level provide teachers with frequent opportunities to closely analyze data, examine student work, set short and long-term goals, and monitor student progress.
- The creation of the “Learning to Choose” class at the middle school level has had a highly positive impact on the academic and behavioral development of an identified group of at-risk students.

What the school needs to improve

- Use the new data-reporting tool to enhance understanding of student progress and to monitor the effectiveness of interventions for all sub-groups.
- Ensure school-wide consistency in the practice of defining individualized short-term student goals in all core subject areas to improve achievement levels.
- Further expand the repertoire of differentiated instruction strategies that teachers use at all grade levels so that learning activities are matched with identified needs of students.

Clarify what the school needs to do to improve the outcomes of identified sub-groups and set specific, measurable goals with interim benchmarks in order to accelerate their learning.

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 principal is committed to improving the Bay School by thoughtfully gathering pertinent information relating to student achievement and making decisions to address identified weaknesses. The school has contracted the services of Learning Directions. This organization provides a system for schools to collect, streamline, analyze, and synthesize data to effectively monitor progress in a meaningful and standardized way. The school now receives a comprehensive set of attendance, test and progress report data every six weeks. This allows information to be easily disaggregated to identify trends and determine which areas need increased attention for which groups of students. This system equips staff members to make sense of data and they are now beginning systematically to use the findings to establish benchmarks, set goals, and plan student programs. However, it is too soon to gauge the full impact of this data-reporting tool on helping the school to further understand learning needs and differentiate goals in all subjects for individual students and sub-groups.

Classroom teachers collect a wide range of information regarding their students with literacy and math work folders, homework folders, and portfolio checklists that chart by the month expected types of evidence needed for each subject area. For the most part these are supported with rubrics but these are not always evident or universally understood by students. Some teachers provide clear written feedback on student work, but this is not a universal practice.

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-wide goals for each subject area and for each grade have been established. This allows each teacher to have a clear picture not only of what students are expected to learn in their grade for each subject, but also a global picture of what precedes and what follows the expectations for that grade. Additionally, in some cases, teachers have set individualized short-term goals for their students in each subject area which are clearly displayed and able to be articulated by students. This has not yet become a standard practice across the school and as a result some students are not able to clearly explain what goals they have to achieve over a series of interim time periods. While some students understand and explicitly relate the use of rubrics to their work and can identify, for example, the specific areas they need to improve as shown by a teacher's assessment form, others are not able to do so.

Last year's inquiry team consisted of four members who focused on a group of fifth, sixth, and seventh graders in the bottom third of their classes. Based on a careful item analysis of test data, the group identified a trend indicating a common weakness in vocabulary and comprehension. The work continues this year and is expanding to

include students in grade 4 through grade 8 who again demonstrate a lack of progress in English language arts. Because there was confusion last year about inquiry team expectations and criteria, the goal of the team this year is to drill down more deeply to uncover the needs of the target population. Further, the team is monitoring lessons learned more effectively and is beginning to disseminate successful strategies to the rest of the staff. The team has yet to make the work more focused by paying close attention to specific sub-skills within the broader areas of vocabulary and comprehension.

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.

Hallways are filled with attractive displays which showcase student work relating to Core Knowledge themes. Teachers take full advantage of abundant high-quality resources which accompany the program contributing to an engaging and well-rounded curriculum. Rigorous math and literacy programs complement theme work and underscore the wide range of connections students make among disciplines. While the Core Knowledge philosophy has not yet reached the middle school level, there is evidence there of common planning by teachers both within and across disciplines to help ensure that students make connections about what they are learning. Teachers routinely share what they know about the progress of students in their classes.

Clear routines and procedures ensure that positive behavior is maintained and that mutual respect is the focus. The principal and assistant principals provide strong leadership with a zero tolerance policy for major infractions. The overall positive school climate is supported by an emphasis on core virtues which are not only posted throughout the building, but also put into practice through discussions and frequent praise for living up to expectations.

Classroom teachers use a workshop model for the delivery of instruction in which the lesson is first introduced to the whole group and then followed up with practice and reinforcement in small groups while the teacher conferences with individuals and provides overall support. The lesson concludes with a wrap-up during which the whole class has an opportunity to summarize what they have learned and to clarify understanding. This model is implemented effectively by the majority of staff but is not followed consistently by teachers in all core subjects. The principal recognizes that differentiated instruction takes many forms. Teachers often use strategies to address the needs of specific students and groups without even realizing that they plan instruction and respond to students’ work according to identified differences. However, the degree of expertise and confidence with differentiation does vary among staff. They realize the importance of further developing in this area and are appreciative of the training they have received so far to develop their 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 staff of the Bay School express eagerness to support one another and to work together to meet student needs. New teachers indicate that they feel comfortable to ask questions and to seek help not only from official mentors or grade level partners but from

administrators or any other teacher. The principal believes strongly that teachers need to receive immediate feedback just as students do in order for constructive suggestions to be effective. As a result, administrators follow up both formal and informal observations with targeted advice to improve specific areas of practice. At this time, for example, some teachers do not consistently vary their instructional practices to best meet the needs of struggling students.

At the beginning of the school year teachers completed surveys which allowed them to prioritize professional development needs. The survey suggested a broad range of possibilities including curriculum (Core Knowledge, Junior Great Books, and Everyday Math), uses of data, rubrics, and assessments, and pedagogical strategies and gave them a chance to come up with their own ideas. Teachers are grateful for the amount, breadth, and quality of professional development that they receive from coaches and trainers within the school and from outside experts. This extensive training has in many cases improved their practice and responded to both school-wide and individual needs. One clear example has been the smooth expansion of the Core Knowledge program into grades 3 through 5.

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 school tracks student academic, attendance, and behavioral progress using Voyager, ECLAS (early childhood literacy assessment system), and Acuity assessments as well as school-specific indicators that are systematically compiled in Learning Directions reports every six weeks. It responds effectively and in a timely fashion when individual students and identified groups do not meet expectations. Having identified a group of academically and behaviorally at-risk sixth grade students last year the school has implemented an innovative and well-conceived program to meet the identified needs of this challenging sub-group. Carefully chosen staff, a secure network of support services, and a behavior modification system to support what has been termed the "Learning to Choose" class has already had a profound and positive impact on the culture of the middle school level.

Regular "Data Chatta" meetings at each grade level provide frequent opportunities for classroom teachers, administrators and support staff to analyze standardized test results, examine student work samples, plan instruction, and check progress at interim time periods to determine if adjustments need to be made. The school does not yet include teachers from all core subject areas to ensure that these areas are fully considered in discussions of student performance and progress.

The school has taken steps to address the progress of level 1 and 2 students in both English language arts and math and has shown improvement from the previous year, particularly for special education students. It is not sufficiently aware, however, of what targets the school needs to reach in order to gain additional credit for each sub-group category to improve the school's progress report. As a result, there is a missed opportunity to set specific, measurable goals with interim benchmarks and the action steps necessary to attain results.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Bay 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>	△	➤	✓	+			
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