

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2008-2009**

**Belle Harbor School**  
**Elementary-Middle 114**  
**134- 01 Cronston Avenue**  
**Queens**  
**NY 11694**

**Principal: Stephen Grill**

**Dates of review: December 10 - 11, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Richard Woolf**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Belle Harbor is an elementary-middle school with 836 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 3% Black, 5% Hispanic, 90% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 93.7%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

### Overall Evaluation

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

Belle Harbor is a popular school that provides students with a very good beginning to their educational careers. It is building a reputation as an increasingly effective all through pre-kindergarten to middle school with more students choosing to stay in the middle school than in previous years. The school is attempting to reinforce this by seeking ways to challenge further its highest achieving students by better use of differentiated instruction in the classroom. The use of a strong curriculum, which has an excellent arts component, is one method the school is adopting to challenge all its students to reach their full potential. Another is through a strong program of personalized professional development and collaborative learning among its dedicated group of teachers. This allows for them to meet weekly and in some cases daily to prepare and plan student work. The professional development clearly focuses on ensuring all teachers have the appropriate training and skills to meet instructional challenges.

This is a safe, secure and harmonious school. Everyone respects each other and students feel they have a family of adults to turn to, to meet their social, emotional or academic needs. Parents play an important role in their children's education. They are both supportive of and challenging to the school. This partnership is working well and proving invaluable in drawing the best out of the students. Similarly, the school has high expectations of its entire community. Attendance is excellent and students want to be in school. The middle school students are very proud to wear their uniforms as a means of showing they are part of an active learning community. In working to make all of this a reality, the school analyses a wide array of external data to judge its overall effectiveness. Using this approach, it continues to identify and implement necessary changes in the pursuit of ongoing improvement.

There are processes in place to set staff and student goals. However, these are not as rigorous as other aspects of the school's work. There is insufficient setting of goals with measurable outcomes to ensure all students make good progress. Likewise, the school has still to monitor its goal setting procedures with rigor to ensure all constituents are accountable for their individual and collective actions. The administration rightly considers this area of growth to be of great importance across the school. The school does have support from outside organizations in helping to extend students' experience and opportunities. However, the school has yet to secure external funding to ensure the continuance of its very effective arts program. This program has a strong element of parental participation that the school wishes to see continue as everyone works together to develop the school's students.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has in place a strong program of teachers' individualized professional development and collaborative planning to help improve student learning.
- Through the development of Core Knowledge, the school is delivering an engaging curriculum.
- This is a harmonious school where students and adults work together in a safe and secure environment that encourages learning to take place.
- The school uses a wide-range of external data to evaluate the effectiveness of its decision-making.
- The school has high expectations of the entire community to advance student learning.
- Parents receive very good information about their children's learning needs and are active participants in their education.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to extend the provision of differentiated instruction for all students but more particularly for the highest achievers.
- Develop more rigorous and measurable goals for staff and students that ensure all students make good progress.
- Ensure that assistance from outside organizations is maintained so that the school's high quality arts instruction continues to be supported.
- Rigorously monitor student progress to ensure the school is on target to meet its overall goals.

## 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 is using data in a productive way to inform instruction and student learning. Teachers' binders are sources of meaningful data that allows them a greater understanding of the students' academic strengths and weaknesses. This in depth analysis occurs for most of the core subjects, but some subjects are yet to become as data rich. The administration uses data to track both individual student and grade level progress. However, there is scope for more closely focused tracking when using data to identify the highest achieving students in each grade level.

The school has a number of special education students but there are relatively few English language learners. Both groups receive appropriate services to raise their levels of understanding. Early indications from assessment tests show both groups are performing at higher levels than at the corresponding time last year. The school's good use of data analysis demonstrates difficulties boys are having in some areas of the curriculum in comparison to the girls. The result of this is the adoption of new reading schemes with subsequent improvements in their work. The administration data analysis allows for the tracking of trends over time. Currently, they are using data far more profitably by making meaningful predictions about individual student cohorts and grade levels. The class at a glance sheet is a good example of a simple but effective method of data collection.

The school is adept in sharing students' learning successes with students and their families. Regular meetings take place between home and school to discuss elements of the work and strategies for its completion. Parents have a clear understanding of the report card structure. This enables them to know how their child is progressing. They are increasingly using the school's website as well as other online assessment features they can access. This partnership is a contributing factor to the improving long-term progression of the school.

**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 makes good use of data to effect change by setting goals for both staff and students. However, the goals are not yet all really challenging, measurable and targeted, with a clear and defined focus on the progress of all students according to their specific abilities. This is done more rigorously in some subject areas than in others. Likewise, some subjects are challenged to achieve a percentage increase, but there is a lack of clarity in the process. Staff, in consultation with the administration, set their own

professional goals. In the same way as for the students, the school does not set teachers specifically challenging, measurable targets that ensure their students' progress. The majority of the school's students are higher functioning young people. They expect challenges and, for the most part, they understand the goal-setting process and can articulate at length the reasons behind the process. Most of the core subjects set student goals arising from their own data collection. However, a number rely too much on English language arts data rather than generating their own specific data as a starting point to set targets. The inquiry team is building on the lessons from last year. Consequently, there are now four small teams in operation working with small groups of students on an individual basis. This is proving most effective in raising these students' academic profiles. The inquiry team shares their learnt experiences from this process on a regular basis with their colleagues.

Parents are very well aware of their children's learning goals. They meet regularly with staff to discuss learning strategies and have an understanding of the value of next-steps learning in helping their child progress academically. The school has high expectations of its learning family. Student behavior is exemplary and, with staff and parents working in conjunction, there is the potential for achievement of greater academic feats. Students want to learn and, as a result, rates of attendance are high. Parents also undertake a number of workshops within the school that relate specifically to helping their children further progress their education.

**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 Core Knowledge curriculum provides a sound basis for instruction across the entire school. It aligns with the mandated curriculum and teachers use the integrated approach to make learning purposeful and challenging for their students. The school has an initiative in place focusing on the improvement of reading and, more importantly, writing. This is across the curriculum and at all grade levels. However, there is a stronger drive to deliver English language arts and math than other subject areas, so subjects like science and social studies appear to be less important. Students comment that they find science a difficult subject and wish they had the opportunity to spend more time studying it. Others felt similarly about social studies in the middle school. However, students do receive a good all round education that includes the arts. The school has a number of teachers who are exceptionally talented, especially in delivering differentiated teaching. However, the school has not yet found adequate ways of sharing this expertise to ensure there is consistency of practice throughout the whole school.

The school makes very good use of its resources. Providing for student learning is of paramount importance and teachers have appropriate equipment to support their teaching. The school is infusing technology more into the classrooms, and students use laptops for research, learning games and word-processing activities. Teachers are training on the development of smartboard technology to enhance their teaching.

This is a happy, harmonious and vibrant school. Teachers and students work well together resulting in a calm, orderly school that is conducive to learning. Above all else, there is a safe and secure environment where everyone treats each other with respect. A facet of school life that students value and that helps them develop their personal and social skills is the opportunity to represent their grade level as a member of the student

council. Similarly, middle school students have a dress code which they feel “stands them out”, and they wear it with pride.

**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 well developed.**

The school has a range of strategies that very effectively support and promote staff professional development. Members of staff have the opportunity to state their own professional development needs through a school-wide survey. This data is collected and each teacher then meets with an administrator to agree an individualized plan to meet their specific needs. The plan takes in both personal and professional needs, though focusing primarily on the improvement of student learning. This approach is proving most effective in challenging teachers to raise their instructional practices. Teachers new to the school fare very well in terms of the support they receive. Not only are there specific professional development activities but there is also on-going help from a mentor. The administration knows and understands the teachers’ strengths and weaknesses and because of this, no teacher feels unsupported.

This staff is very collaborative and teachers work well together. They have regular opportunities to engage in meaningful professional dialogue. The grade level meetings, where frank, open and honest curriculum debate takes place weekly in a professional manner, are good examples of this. Teachers frequently discuss instructional strategies, though there is not yet in place a planned program of intervisitations as a means of ensuring all staff consistently share best practices.

The principal and assistant principals undertake numerous formal and informal observations throughout the year. Teachers feel empowered to teach because they are not micro-managed by administrators. Rather, the feedback from these observations supports them further by helping them improve their instruction. Analyzing the data from these visits allows administrators to gauge the success of professional development programs and amend according to further staff need. The school has still to exploit avenues of funding to ensure very successful programs like Parent as Arts Partner continues when current funding streams expire. The continuing engagement of outside organizations in the provision of a wide-ranging program of extra curricular activities is an area the school has to yet to develop fully.

**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 takes a number of steps to monitor student progress. This includes both at grade level and from a whole school perspective. However, current procedures are not as rigorous as other aspects of the school’s work. There is currently no mechanism within the action planning process for rigorous formal monitoring to take place. Similarly, the monitoring of staff goals lacks rigor, although there is some level of accountability at grade level meetings through discussions that take place around student progress data.

Members of the administration use data from a wide range of external sources very effectively to monitor overall school progress. Their positive response to the last Quality Review and Learning Environment Survey is ensuring that students and staff benefit from the suggestions to move the school forward. The reaction to receiving a low Progress Report grade has been incisive and demanding. Actions to improve student progress are far reaching and achievement levels are rising across the school. The administration tracks progress on a daily basis as evidenced by stronger instructional practice. The school has a vision to challenge students through strong academic teaching, building self-esteem and confidence to equip them for the educational journey ahead. This is apparent throughout the building and everyone is eager to participate in achieving that vision.

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Belle Harbor School</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, DY0, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

**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.**

To what extent do ...	△	➤	✓	+
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.**

To what extent do school leaders...	△	➤	✓	+
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.**

To what extent do ...	△	➤	✓	+
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	

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
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