

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

Public School 233

Elementary - High School 233

**109 - 36 204 Street
Queens
NY 11412**

Principal: Debbie Edmonds

Dates of review: March 3 - 4, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 233 is an elementary-high school with 365 students from grade 1 through grade 12. The school population comprises 40% Black, 30% Hispanic, 15% White, 14% Asian and 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native students. The student body includes 31% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 63% of the students enrolled and girls account for 37%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 84.9%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

This District 75 special education school is located across seven sites. It serves students with severe multiple disabilities, those on the autism spectrum, and others with emotional deficits. Students attend for the whole year, organized in self-contained settings or inclusion classes and are integrated into mainstream classes with the support of paraprofessionals. Class staff ratios reflect students' needs. 96% of students participate in the New York State Alternate Assessments, with the remaining 4% of students participating in Standardized Assessments.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Public School 233 offers a caring, supportive environment to students. It works carefully in partnership with parents to achieve realistic student progress centered on their individual education plans. In this way, students develop real-life skills, self-esteem and independence, with many moving to less restrictive environments. The parents of one student gratefully reported that, "Moving their son to this school was like moving from Hell to Heaven." The respectful staff collaborates to provide comprehensive support for each student's needs. As a result, paraprofessionals and related service providers skillfully extend students' skills in tandem with teachers and parents. Teachers' planning and delivery of instruction varies in quality, but is suitably rooted in students' individual education plans. However, not all subjects have clear goals for individuals and groups to inform detailed planning of lessons or tasks and to adequately monitor progress of concept and skills mastery in that subject. Not all lessons consistently challenge learners to extend their skills and to encourage a growth in confidence and responsibility. Goals at all levels are not consistently precise with robust, quantifiable indicators for accurately monitoring progress.

Administrators complement each other and ensure daily communication between all sites. Leaders and faculty devise and refine common systems for assessment, data gathering, the unified curriculum and professional development. All the information that staff analyzes relates to students' needs and achievements and so informs adjustment to programs and planning for future success. The wide opportunities for formal and informal professional development do not link to explicit teacher goals, based on observation and professional dialogue. As a result, the administration does not formally evaluate the impact of professional development on teacher growth and student outcomes. However, the school community shares a common purpose and vision. The principal and cabinet have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas they wish to refine. This enabling school helps students to believe in themselves as valued members of the wider community so they aspire and achieve.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Staff gather a wide range of data, relevant to service categories, using uniform tools to provide a picture of achievement and progress, especially of individual students with the administration ensuring consistency and communication across all sites.
- Teachers report formally and informally to parents about individual students regularly, so they work in partnership to share an understanding of achievement and next steps to secure meeting student goals.
- The safe, supportive culture emphasizes life skills, stresses that everyone can achieve, and builds students' independence, self-esteem and sense of worth in the community.
- Teachers plan lessons within the unified thematic curriculum that offer varied ways of experiencing success, rooted in students' individual education plans, and supported by use of adaptive equipment to ensure equal access.
- The school offers plentiful opportunities for professional development to a committed staff that works to improve their skills and share expertise with a common professional language.
- The Comprehensive Educational Plan details relevant goals, based on analysis of data regarding students' needs, reflecting ongoing school community involvement and an understanding of work in progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend goal setting across the school so that all subjects identify specific goals, short- and long-term, for individuals and groups that reference subject content and skills, allied to tasks and clear assessment of skills mastery.
- Ensure that all students are challenged to take risks as learners and so extend their learning consistently in all subjects.
- Refine the collaborative teacher professional growth process to ensure that all teachers devise specific goals linked to school focus and individual needs, with clear monitoring procedures.
- Formalize the systematic evaluation of the impact of professional development on student outcomes with reference to all subject areas.

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.

Leaders and teachers have developed common methods for gathering and analyzing a wide range of data relating to the different service categories of students within the school. Teachers of alternate assessment students, for example, routinely record incremental progress using photography, particularly for functional life skills. All teachers routinely maintain individual portfolios and folders for students, including assessments of math and other aspects captured through the thematic curriculum. With the majority of students involved in New York State Alternate Assessments, teachers are accountable for gathering evidence of student work that fulfills alternate grade level indicator requirements in data folios. Administrators maintain suitable oversight and offer effective support. Teachers and leaders collect formative and summative data regularly, incorporating tools such as "Scantron" as they become available. Related service providers similarly complete ongoing records of student achievement toward mastery of goals. Through analysis of this wealth of data, teachers build a comprehensive picture of individual, group and class performance and progress. Analysis, particularly by the data specialist and cabinet ensures that the administration notices trends in performance of groups by gender, by English language learners and service categories. The school is mindful of other groups within its student population so tracks, for example, students who have seizures. Communication between sites and within cohorts means that all staff are "data aware" and involved in collection, analysis and action resulting from such analysis. In this way, through noting differences in boys' and girls' emotional needs, teachers implemented an anti-bullying program to positive effect.

Teachers communicate freely and valuably with parents in addition to the three formal report cards, with an additional report for students who attend Summer school. One parent spoke for many saying, "Communication is open and effective, which is especially needed for the special education child." The communication book is one of a number of useful methods for daily contact between home and school, containing functional and academic skills exchange of information.

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's work is clearly rooted in students' individual education plans, evidenced in lessons and the work of related service providers. The thematic curriculum encompasses literacy, math, social studies, science, functional life skills and other

subjects. Teachers work carefully to devise goals derived from students' individual education plans and form incremental steps to achieve annual goals but in some cases, individual goals do not sufficiently detail precise enough targets and monitoring based on quantifiable indicators. Not all subject teachers have established clearly defined goals to secure students' progress and mastery.

The school leadership team represents all school constituents. The team actively formulates the Comprehensive Educational Plan and regularly monitors progress toward its goals. Clearly rooted in data, the plan rightly reflects the needs of certain service categories of students and other priorities, such as professional development. The administration also regularly notes progress toward the goals, formally and informally.

Frequent communication with parents reinforces expectations of achievement, attendance and behavior. Parents and teachers work in partnership to the benefit of students, with common understanding of the student's needs, capabilities and progress. One parent commented that, "In this school, the individual education plan is a living, breathing document." Attendance procedures are robust, with interventions resulting from data analysis having a positive effect. The supportive partnership of home and school reinforces clear behavior expectations. As a result, students self-monitor and modify behaviors using programs such as the "Power of Choice," when indicated. One senior student proudly explained how support from staff and home enabled him to manage his anger, empathize with his victims, so that he is now in control of his feelings.

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 has developed a unified thematic curriculum aligned with both the New York State Standards and alternate grade level indicators for New York State Alternate Assessment requirements. Teachers incorporate multi-sensory approaches, which allow different ways for students to achieve success in several content areas including life skills. Using adaptive communication devices and other assistive devices and technology, the best lessons ensure access for all students and support co-operative learning within the context of student individual education plan goals. One teacher used the Smart Board to enable a student to successfully simulate moving icebergs into the sea while counting them aloud. Another structured group task in cooking saw one student giving instructions using her voice output device, while another held an electric hand-mixer in a bowl and a third student activated the mixer using a remote touch pad. In this way, the speech teacher fully integrated individual support for one student while fostering responsibility in all. However, not all lessons consistently encourage students to take risks as learners by challenging them to extend their skills and so build confidence, responsibility and sense of community. The quality of planning and delivery of instruction varies, although based on individual education plans. Some lessons do not evidence sufficient planning to enable students to demonstrate content and skill mastery. Vocational and inclusion programs suitably build students' sense of self-worth in the community. Leaders and staff maximize the use of limited space.

Adults demonstrate care and respect for students, so that all constituents have a voice. Teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers work together collegially and are mutually supportive. Students have aspirations, feel safe and that they can talk with

adults if they have a problem. One student said, "The teachers are here for you. When I first came I was nervous, but they made it comfortable."

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Teachers and leaders share a desire to hone their professional practice. They valuably share a common language in reflecting on instructional practice through the "Professional Teaching Standards." Staff benefit from wide-ranging formal and informal opportunities to develop their skills, relating to students' service category needs. The school professional development plan rightly references data, including the previous Quality Review, in addition to programs for specific student populations and subjects, such as creative arts. Common planning time, monthly faculty meetings and inter-visitations feature teachers sharing and "turn-keying" information. There are now two inquiry teams, with more teachers involved than previously. As a result, they share their findings readily, increase their own skills and develop those of other staff. New teachers receive useful formal and informal support, so integrate smoothly into faculty. Daily relays and postings communicate essential information suitably between sites. Teachers establish professional areas for growth based on feedback from lesson observations, walkthroughs and discussion with administration. However, there is not always sufficient precision in professional growth goals and the monitoring process to evaluate progress robustly. There is no clear linkage between lesson observations and teacher professional goals.

In addition to the comprehensive support offered to help families and students with their particular needs, many students benefit from the established partnerships that offer vocational opportunities. Currently, 147 students take part in off-site training and 50 in site-based placements. In this way, students grow in self-confidence. They contribute as valued members of the community in varied settings, including senior citizens' centers and Staples and McDonald's. The school has developed positive working relationships with its campus schools, to the benefit of its students studying at those sites.

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.

Leaders routinely examine all available data to evaluate curricular decisions. In this way, they worked with teachers to establish a revised math assessment and instructional guide. Similarly, the new transition coordinators offer a checklist to parents and students when they are researching over 21 programs for "aging out" students. The monthly thematic curriculum units offer inbuilt assessments. These punctuate the year, marking times when leaders and teachers make decisions about adjusting, revising and reinforcing specific instruction for students. Leaders use "Brigance" and other assessments as suitable checkpoints in the year to examine school plans regarding English, math, functional life skills and several other subjects. In this way, the school recognizes the value of introducing The Assessment of Basic Learning and Language

Skills for students in 6:1:1 classes to assist teachers' decisions in setting goals for individual education plans.

The administration valuably uses information from the Learning Environment Survey, Quality Review and other sources to inform the Comprehensive Educational Plan goals. These rightly identify areas relating to students' needs. Leaders monitor all aspects of the school's work regularly, although not always formally. As such, the administration does not robustly evaluate the impact of professional development on instruction at the individual and whole-school level in all subject areas. Because of this there is inconsistent correlation between all goals in the school and the impact on student achievement. However, many students make notable progress, especially in life skills, due to the nurturing environment that expects everyone to achieve. One parent encapsulated the school community's shared vision for students saying, "They shoot for the moon and if they don't get there, they reach the stars."

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Public School 233	△	➤	✓	+
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
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