



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**Public School 255**

**Elementary-High School 255**

**158-40 76th Road**

**Queens**

**NY 11366**

**Principal: Richard Marowitz**

**Dates of review: March 9 - 11, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Frank Jones**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 255 is an elementary-high school with 391 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 15% Black, 31% Hispanic, 31% White, and 22% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 82% of the students enrolled and girls account for 18%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 92%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

This district 75 school is housed in eight sites which increase the logistical burden of their management. The sites vary in size and suitability for teaching students on the autistic spectrum.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

This is a very good school, which is unswerving in its dedication and determination to meet the specific and complex needs of the population it serves. Parents are immensely positive about the school and cannot speak highly enough about the personal and emotional support it provides for both their children and themselves. The support for students is apposite and derived from the intelligent use of data, which allows the school to set pertinent and realistic goals for all students. The evaluation of the information the school has collected for each child enables it to make revisions to student grouping and for staff to realign their instruction to ensure goals are met. On-going assessments are time consuming and paper driven but nonetheless are instrumental in identifying and formulating the next steps in learning. The school does not yet use this wealth of information to identify trends to ascertain if patterns emerge either in instruction or student performance. Administrators provide good support for teachers. However, they have yet to identify clearly, what each member of staff has to do to improve their instruction and use this information to set individual developmental goals for them that have benchmarks against which they can monitor progress.

The school has developed a highly personalized curriculum for each student, which has a range of enrichment opportunities within it. The school has implemented a range of school-based work-related opportunities that enable students to rehearse and apply those functional skills required in later life. Related services are very much part of the personal package the students receive and do much to enhance, reinforce and compliment the programs that are operating. This culture of teamwork and commitment pervades the school and students are rightly the beneficiaries. Staff are very committed to their profession and the students they teach. The principal and assistants are a complete team, lead by example and have developed within the school and the wider community a bond of mutual trust. Their highly focused approach and intense work ethic detracts occasionally from the time to stand back and take a more strategic view of roles and responsibilities that clearly evaluate the processes which have become custom and practice at the school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The passion and commitment displayed by administrators and staff to meet the complex and specific needs of all students are of the highest order.
- The communication with and support for parents is exceptional and is acknowledged and greatly appreciated by a family of people that requires the recognition that they are not alone.
- The quality of assessment and its use to inform instruction and individual education plans is particularly good, ensuring the next steps in the development of student learning are rigorously addressed.
- The highly personalized curriculum is carefully attuned to meeting students' individual academic, personal, social and communication needs.
- The research carried out by the inquiry team is extremely good and has provided proven strategies that greatly enhance the access skills of students to enable them to begin to articulate and therefore satisfy their needs.
- The attention and acute focus of the school to ensure the long term outcomes for each student matches their ability and ensures their placement and provision is at its optimum level.
- The senior team leads by example and has developed within the school and the wider community a bond of mutual trust which is exemplified by the unswerving commitment of the staff.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that each teacher has a personal professional development plan that clearly indicates what they have to do to improve their practice and that they are supported by learning opportunities to achieve success.
- Continue to formalize a rigorous analysis and evaluation of data to identify trends in performance and hold teachers to account as a result.
- Adopt a more strategic approach to school development which clearly demonstrates the operational activities which will have most impact on student learning and who is responsible for their implementation.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school very effectively gathers an extensive range of information on each student and uses this particularly well to track and monitor student performance. On entry to the school student data is limited. However, the school remedies this position as it makes assessments in such areas as social skills, communication skills, level of independence and discussions with parents. Using these and additional assessments the school formulates detailed individual education plans, which have both rigor and relevance. To ensure consistency of approach across sites an annual time line is produced indicating completion dates for assessments. All pertinent data is therefore available for each student providing a cohesive and structured approach to identifying the next steps in learning. The school uses the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) to collect data in core subjects systematically and this provides useful benchmarks against which to measure progress. Each student has a binder, which contains the IEP and a comprehensive range of other assessments, which informed it. This useful and essential document tells the story of each student's personal, social, individual academic, and communication needs. Importantly it is used extremely well to formulate plans for future development. The quality of assessment and its use to inform instruction and individual education plans are particularly good, ensuring the next steps in the development of student learning are rigorously addressed.

Parents are highly involved in providing information about their child and in the formulation of the individual education plan. A parental survey is completed prior to producing the plan and parents use this time to identify goals which they believe have particular relevance to the needs of their child which will enhance their quality of life. This close partnership and effective two-way transfer of information ensures that parents become an integral and valuable collaborator in the developmental process. Parents are extremely grateful for this opportunity and the other effective methods the school employs to successfully enhance meaningful communication. Report cards are sent home three times a year but are not specifically significant because they are superseded by constant personal communication opportunities which occur on a daily basis.

The school has interrogated available data relating to gender and other subgroups but no discernible pattern has evolved. Supervisors review data and meet informally with teachers to discuss student performance and next steps in learning. Thus, the school has begun, but not formalized on a regular basis, the analysis and evaluation of data to identify performance trends over time and discuss this information with teachers.

**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 well developed.**

Individual education plans provide a range of academic- and skills-based goals. The school supplements this with additional information from the related services, which result in extremely effective support for the learning process. These plans are well written and contain the incremental steps required to achieve the goals identified. Therefore, teachers are able to monitor progress towards them and implement revisions as required. Goals are time scaled and are linked to report cards for parents, though assessment is ongoing and continuous. Where applicable, goals are measurable and the school monitors mastery of skills by using percentage figures over three consecutive assessments. In this way, they are able to judge with a considerable measure of accuracy how well a student has mastered a skill. Staff are therefore able to ascertain progress and where necessary adapt their teaching techniques to support the learning of a new skill. Teachers find the Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS) a useful process for charting performance. The goals set in this are sequential, incremental and testable. Similarly, the use of the Edmark Reading program provides an easily usable structure for assessment. Both of these programs feature heavily in the goal-setting process and provide a structure and guidance that assists the evaluation of student performance. As a result, the school uses assessment of learning exceptionally well to inform student goals and teacher planning.

Annual school goals are in place and form the schools’ Comprehensive Educational Plan. They result from the school evaluation process that has identified strengths and weaknesses and are pertinent and robust. All goals are measurable, time-scaled and include success criteria. Each goal focuses on improving student provision and performance. They are therefore extremely useful in giving direction and purpose to the school.

The communication with and support for parents is exceptional. Parents recognize this and they acknowledge and greatly appreciate this high degree of access and involvement. As one parent said, “They not only educate him (son) but educate me.” Other parents affirmed this view and stated, “They look past the autism to the person.” Parents welcome the support groups and ‘fun groups’ as it provides them with valuable opportunities to talk with other parents whose children have autism. As a result they realise they are not alone, learn from each other and gain in confidence.

**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 well developed.**

The highly personalized curriculum is carefully attuned to meeting the individual academic, personal, social and communication needs of each student. It therefore both challenges and engages them whilst remaining relevant to students’ individual maturation and functioning levels. Music, art and physical education serve to further enrich the standards based curriculum. The school provides visits to the cinema and opportunities to go bowling which give students wonderful experiences of operating in situations previously not entertained by parents. This also gives an important message

to parents about their child's capabilities. The school has adopted programs entitled, 'Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped' (TEACCH), Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Positive Behaviour Supports for children with challenging behaviours (PBS) or Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABE) as key vehicles for instruction. This ensures a continuity of approach within each site and consistency across the school. This allows the school to make comparisons between teachers while providing continuity and security for students. Importantly it also enables teachers to address closely the cognitive, social, and sensory communication deficits of students with autism. PECS is highly effective in supporting students with protocols in the classroom. Similarly, using TEACCH, students are given regular opportunities to practice recently acquired skills until they become embedded. Teachers for their part engage in one to one instruction and continuous assessment of student acquisition of goals. As a consequence they vary their instructional approaches intelligently as the situation demands. The school has invested in technology and continues to do so as evaluation demonstrates that this is having a high impact on students' engagement, learning and behaviour.

The cabinet is very cohesive and works exceptionally well together for the benefit of the students. The passion and expertise displayed by administrators and staff to meet the complex and specific needs of all students is of the highest order. The senior team lead by example and have developed within the school and the wider community a bond of mutual trust which is exemplified by the unswerving commitment of the staff. As a result the academic and personal growth of the students is nurtured, developed and expanded.

**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 inquiry team has carried out some exceptionally useful class based research, which has provided proven strategies that greatly enhance the access skills of students. This enables them to begin to articulate their needs by developing the ability to request help by exchanging 'help' picture symbols. The team report a high degree of success which has opened up numerous possibilities for the students as they develop further their communication skills. Coupled with this has been the production of a packet for other teachers, which reflects the work done and provides a range of strategies for all teachers to employ. Not only has the team been successful in its inquiry but also an additional and hugely important outcome has been the reduction in student frustration and the consequent improvement in their behaviors. The enthusiasm of the team and commitment to the cause is infectious and their palpable success has led to the formation of another inquiry team at a different site.

A new site opened up this year and 18 new teachers hired throughout the school. Extremely good induction procedures including mentors, buddies and other support structures are in place. As a result, teachers say that they feel very well supported in their instruction and always have someone to turn to when the occasion arises. This reflects a key goal in the Comprehensive Educational Plan 'to provide all new staff with professional development in the best practices for teaching children with autism'. The school asks all teachers to reflect on their own practice and select professional development opportunities from a menu. Advice and support given following lesson observations is well targeted and apposite but the procedure lacks rigor in matching training to observed need. Teachers therefore are aware of their immediate development areas. However, they do not have a formalized professional development

plan that clearly indicates what they have to do to improve their practice, supported by the learning opportunities to achieve success. On occasion, there is a synergy between lesson observations that take place and the developmental opportunities available but there is inconsistency in the approach that limits the rate of teacher progress.

The school is highly committed and effective in making a difference to the young people it teaches by providing them with functional skills and coping strategies that will help them to operate effectively. Therefore, staff work extremely conscientiously to ensure students have the opportunity to maximize their potential. The school works with relevant agencies such as Rite Aid to provide a range of vocational opportunities for those students where access is a possibility.

**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 addresses individual student needs well and differentiates support accordingly. This is not always the case with individual teacher goals. Class-based support is always available but individual developmental goals and interim check points by which they could be achieved are not sufficiently rigorous. The individual education plan goals are exceptionally well monitored and their development informed by an extensive range of pertinent data. The close monitoring enables the school to adjust programs and group compositions so provision clearly matches student need. Teachers for their part think critically about student progress towards their goals and where necessary adjust their teaching strategies to ensure success.

The administration works exceptionally hard to support all facets of the school across all its sites. In spite of this the school does not sufficiently take account of its own evaluations and therefore strategic development becomes clouded in the intense day to day operational activities carried out by the administrators. However the analysis of processes and practices has not been evaluated at sufficient depth to ascertain whether there could be even better ways for the school to function more effectively and with less pressure on time and individual commitments. The school does demonstrate outstanding purpose and direction which reflects the vision of the principal and is supported by all concerned.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Public School 255</b>	△	➤	✓	+
<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>	△	➤	✓	+
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>	△	➤	✓	+
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, 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.**

To what extent do ...	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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				<b>X</b>

**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...	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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				<b>X</b>

**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 ...	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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				<b>X</b>

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed