

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

Elementary - High School 993
85 -15 258th Street
Queens
NY 11001

Principal: Jacqueline Zaretsky

Dates of review: April 29 – May 1, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Denis Pittman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 993 is an elementary-high school with 397 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 33% black, 24% Hispanic, 25% white, 1% Native American and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 72% of the students enrolled and girls account for 28%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007-2008 was 86.6%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

This is a multi-sited school located in eight different locations within the borough of Queens. Five sites comprise elementary grade level students, another is designated as a middle school and two are located within community-based high schools. Many of the locations have fully inclusive settings, in partnership with a general education school. The 397 students experience an array of disabilities that include school phobia, severe learning difficulties, emotional disturbance and autism. Three hundred and thirty-six students are alternative assessment students. All students have individual education plans and many are mandated for occupational, physical and speech therapy. Thirteen languages are spoken within the school.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The purposeful commitment and collaborative style of working between the principal and staff has resulted in very good academic, emotional and social growth among the students. The school is well ordered and provides a supportive and nurturing environment. Staff have a very effective close partnership with families, providing them with daily information, in order to share incremental changes in behavior and accomplishments. The school systematically collects, utilizes and evaluates data about students' individual performance in all core subjects. They then use this information exceptionally well to identify where any student is underachieving and then implement effective remedial strategies. Currently the school does not interpret the data in science and social studies to give an overview of outcomes in these subjects. The school efficiently gathers information about the performance of subgroups such as English language learners, the comparative achievement between boys and girls and school phobic students. In the context of individual education plans short-term objectives lack preciseness about completion dates. The school has very effective procedures for collecting data about behavior and attendance and uses it well to promote improvement in these areas. The focus on providing high-quality instruction allied to increased academic rigor has resulted in a decrease of inappropriate student behavior.

The school provides an innovating and stimulating curriculum to meet the specific needs of its students. Staff have been very proactive in seeking challenging programs to promote students' academic and personal growth. The school uses technology well to promote its objectives. The school is self-reflective and eager to improve its practice. To that end staff have good access to an extensive range of relevant professional development. The robust and rigorous administrative systems and collaborative meetings help promote consistency of outcomes across the sites. The multiplicity of data inputs and effective monitoring enable the school to know itself well.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a very effective leader, providing a clear direction and purpose for a complex educational institution.
- The detailed range of data that the school gathers provides staff with a comprehensive picture of the students' individual performance, which they use to help students make good progress.
- The strong and supportive partnership with parents means that there is a common understanding of how to move students forward according to their specific need.
- High expectations, coupled with a strong emphasis on academic as well as personal development, are reflected in significant improvements in behavior and attendance.
- The school consistently implements robust and effective administrative systems across all sites, which successfully promotes effective instruction.
- The extensive and challenging curriculum is well rooted in students' individual education programs of need and is supported well by relevant technology and resources.
- Staff work very well together as a team across all the sites, and have substantial opportunities to develop their professional skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide an informal checklist of individual education plan short-term objectives to provide more specific timeframes for completion.
- For standardized assessed students collate the extensive individual data in science and social studies to generate a subject overview.
- Build upon the good practice of students' self-assessment to encourage self-reflection on learning goals in all service categories.

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 is very effective in collecting a wide range of information about student performance and progress in all core subjects. Administrative and specialty staff efficiently develop detailed profiles, spreadsheets and charts to facilitate collection, analysis and dissemination of data to teachers, related service providers and parents throughout the school year. Currently this detailed information has not been disaggregated to provide an overview of outcomes in specific subjects such as science and social studies. The data is there but it has not been analyzed in that particular format. Appropriately, the school provides teachers across all sites with assessment calendars for alternate and standardized assessments students. Database programs such as Early Learning Skill Builders (ELSB), Educational Program for Gifted Youth (EPGY) and School-wide Information System (SWIS) provide individual and summary data, which is systematically analyzed for trends, patterns, and progress in literacy, math and behavioral supports. These exemplars indicate that teachers have very good information on students in terms of learning disabilities, recent and longer-term progress, behavior and attendance. Consistent features in the school are standardized procedures for the compilation of a teacher data-binder and the extensive use of student portfolios to collect and assess artifacts of student work.

The complex nature of the school means that the needs of many subgroups have to be accommodated. The school does this very successfully. In meeting the various dimensions of autism, the school is very precise in monitoring language and work habits so that they can make modifications to instruction when necessary. In a different context, the subgroups of school phobic students are carefully assessed for career training and vocational opportunities. These arrangements also provide students with opportunities for self-reflection on the development of their learning goals.

The school collects daily information about the progress students make towards meeting their behavior targets. This specific focus positively promotes a calm and orderly environment in classrooms and in hallways. Attendance is about the average for this type of school. The improving attendance of school phobic students is particularly impressive. The school responds to incidences of absence quickly by daily phone calls, sending out letters and home visits. As a result, attendance levels are being sustained and gradually improving.

Parents receive formal monthly progress reports, as well as daily updates on their children's progress, through home/school books. This arrangement is greatly valued by parents. In addition, the school has systematically instituted and developed the use of phone logs, newsletters and the school website to enhance communication with families. Parents feel that there is a very positive partnership with the school to support their children and help them to gain steady improvement.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's goals, 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.

The school sets precise goals for students through their individual education programs, including reading, math and social competencies. They also set targets for sustaining and improving behavior. Staff effectively review these academic and personal goals formally at the end of each marking period. This procedure is supplemented by an ongoing evaluation through the use of tracking sheets, which are used well to monitor the acquisition of individual education plan goals. The school sets challenging goals in the core subjects and functional life skills, which build upon achievements and set the next learning steps. The goals that the school sets are suitably specific and measurable. Currently short-term objectives, which have been identified in individual education plans, do not have sufficiently precise timeframes for completion when transmitted to class planning. The school sets rigorous goals for different subgroups, such as English language learners, and gives a sharp focus to identifying differences in the relative performance of boys and girls. This is particularly relevant since the number of girls is significantly lower than the number of boys. Generally, the analysis of subgroups is very systematic and in consequence, the school quickly recognizes underachievement.

The school-wide goals set in the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan are the outcome of collaborative processes involving the administration, staff and parents. In this way, the school community has a good understanding of the school's current strengths and areas for development. The formulated SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time bound) generate detailed action plans that focus on specific areas in need of improvement such as reading comprehension among grades 3 and 4 students. The school leadership team very effectively monitors progress towards goals, as specified in the plan, through monthly meetings and adjusts the action plan as necessary in order to meet stated objectives.

All staff promote higher expectations through their individual and shared work in classrooms and discussions with parents. They convey these expectations through daily communication in student notebooks, parent coordinator newsletters, family weekend activities and open school conferences. In this way, parents who make the commitment to become involved with the school have a clear understanding of what they need to do at home to support their children's progress. A variety of investigative teams, such as the positive behavior and intervention support team and inquiry teams, regularly provide the school community with relevant information about the students they have been working with. Parents are appropriately included in this communication loop.

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 school provides an extensive range of activities to promote students' intellectual, emotional, academic and physical growth. Curricula are carefully selected to align with State requirements as identified in core subjects, the arts and life skills. In order to

address flexibility in meeting student need, the school places a particular emphasis on selecting programs that accommodate subgroups of students who may need augmentative devices and visual technology. For example, the school has embarked upon a researched-based program, "Tangible Symbols," which incorporates visual, tactile symbols to increase communication skills for visually impaired students. This program has already made clear differences in facilitating language acquisition, math and life skills development. These innovative approaches are also reflected in the "Getting Ready to Learn" program, which emphasizes sensory integration, yoga and motor planning activities. Parents report being "amazed" at the progress their children have made. All students are exposed to learning opportunities in the arts, which include classical, African and Caribbean musical performance and songs. The curriculum and instructional programs are specifically selected to have an assessment capability. In this way staff are given effective support for planning their instruction to align with individual education plan goals and promote the differentiation of activities to meet student needs. The school efficiently produces pacing calendars in the core subjects, which facilitates lesson planning and enables differentiated instruction for students in all disability categories, grades and subgroups.

The administration and the school leadership team collaboratively review the budget to assess the impact of programs purchased. The data the school has collected indicates that students are making significant incremental gains due to a plethora of initiatives. The school has also been proactive in acquiring additional resources to promote innovative and stimulating instruction. For example the acquisition of a significant technology grant has resulted in the upgrade of computers across all sites to facilitate planning, adaptation and differentiation of instruction. This provision has made a significant difference to the effective delivery of science instruction for middle and high school students by providing online experimental facilities.

Despite the positive outcomes of the learning environment survey, which indicates above average levels of trust, safety and engagement of parents, students and staff, the administration is determined to improve survey results. To that end, a very effective parent coordinator is vigorously reaching out to parents to extend weekend networking activities, promote additional parental workshops and expand the Title 111 ESL Institute.

Relationships are good throughout the individual sites and classrooms are positive environments for learning. Teachers work well with paraprofessionals to deliver the planned programs, which support the academic and personal development of students. Staff are respectful to each other, providing good role models in teamwork and partnership.

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 places a strong emphasis professional development and many staff attend external training in order to continually improve student outcomes. The school has effectively collated details of staff participation in trainings, which show a relevance to improving student outcomes and supporting school-wide goals. Through lesson observations, teachers' self-assessment and collaborative discussions between staff and administrators, they identify the specific needs of individuals. The administration has developed an effective observation tool based on the teaching standards of Santa Cruz. A reflective component enables teachers to assess their own performance and needs

and in this context provides details for an individualized approach to professional development. Teachers confirm that they value the support they receive from the administration, through this analysis of their teaching practice. The mentoring of new staff is particularly effective in this respect. The administration has been particularly proactive in encouraging staff to be involved in inquiry teams. These inquiry teams are in place at three sites. The teachers of several disciplines and disability categories effectively collaborate to analyze assessment data, modify and adapt student work and differentiate instruction in order to improve student outcomes and reach cohort goals. For example, the effective implementation of a math interventions program (Everyday Math, EPGY) provides baseline data in order to support instruction aligned with individual education plan goals. Staff have regular opportunities to share good practice through cross-site meetings and intervisitations to promote the work of the inquiry teams.

Staff work well in collaboration with families and other service providers, such as speech and occupational therapists, to provide substantial care and support for families who require it. Individual students who are struggling receive timely and frequent interventions from the school counselors so that difficulties can be resolved.

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 well developed.

The school has a high-quality data and management system for effectively monitoring its work. For example, the in-house quality assurance system related to teachers' data binders is consistent throughout the sites and has made a positive difference in their ability to rigorously monitor student outcomes. The school systematically administers formative assessments, which include Acuity, Performance Series, Brigance, ECLAS and program-based tests, to provide consistent data that the administration monitors to assess progress. In addition, the inquiry teams share their findings with school leaders after each regularly scheduled meeting. The findings of this accumulated evidence enable the administrative staff and teachers to modify instructional programs and make adaptations as necessary. The accommodation constraints on providing opportunities for scientific experimentation led to the acquisition of two science mobile carts so as to improve learning opportunities for students.

The administration meets every week to discuss and evaluate the school's progress toward meeting wider goals. For example, they systematically evaluate the effectiveness of professional development after a review of informal observations, formative assessments, intra-site visits and collaborative activities. Where necessary, the administration is proactive in its response in identifying the need for additional support and training to facilitate school-wide objectives. For example, the school has identified a need to extend the scope of ARIS data training for staff. The principal's valuable contribution to the life of the school is reflected in her proactive leadership style. The school has a self-management designation, which is promoted by the structured and efficient administrative practices implemented by the principal. All members of the school community highly value her purposeful leadership. She has a clear vision for the development of the school. She takes steps to ensure this vision is shared by displaying the school's mission statement in classrooms and hallways. She makes herself accessible to parents and staff in order to communicate how well the school is doing and what next steps for improvement are. Parents value this openness and they are appreciative of the discernible progress being shown by their children.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Public School 993	△	➤	✓	+
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.

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
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.

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
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.

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
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X

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