

Quality Review

Report

2008-2009

Elementary- Middle School 017
778 Forest Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Robin Cohen

Dates of review: May 13 - 15, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Denis Pittman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 17 is an elementary-middle school with 363 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 43% Black, 52% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% American Indian and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 87% of the students enrolled and girls account for 13%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 89.9%. The school is not in receipt of title one funding.

This is a multi-sited school located in five different locations within the borough of South Bronx. Many of the sites have fully inclusive settings in partnership with a general education school. The students experience an array of disabilities that include severe learning difficulties, emotional disturbance and autism. All students have individual education plans (IEP's) and many are mandated for occupational, physical and speech therapy. The school offers an all-year-round program to all students.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The strong commitment and collaborative style of working between the principal and staff has resulted in positive academic, emotional and social growth among the students. The principal's vision for the school gives a clear sense of purpose to its activities. The school is orderly and provides a supportive and nurturing environment. An open partnership with families, supplemented with daily information, enables parents to share progress in behavioral responses and accomplishments. The school collects, evaluates and utilizes data about students' individual performance in core subjects methodically. However, the formative data for social studies and science is not collated systematically to provide an overview of progress in relation to skills and competences in these areas. Generally, however, administrators analyze baseline information thoroughly to identify where any student is underachieving and then implement effective remedial strategies. The school efficiently gathers information about the performance of sub-groups such as English language learners and the comparative achievement between boys and girls. The school's thorough procedures for collecting data about behavior and attendance enable it to promote improvement in these areas. The focus on providing good quality instruction allied to an increased academic emphasis has resulted in a decrease of inappropriate student behavior. However, in some of the standardized assessed classes insufficiently differentiated activities fail to meet the needs of individual students. The school provides an innovating and stimulating curriculum to meet the specific needs of its students. Staff have been imaginative in seeking challenging programs to promote students' academic and personal growth and use technology to enrich students' learning opportunities. In some lessons, however, there is insufficient correlation between students' IEP goals and the planned teaching activities. The school is self reflective and keen to improve its practice, although some action planning is not sufficiently robust in its identification of benchmarks for progress and staff accountabilities. An extensive range of relevant professional development is helping to build the capacity of the school and a strong climate of mutual trust and respect promotes the personal development of the students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's ambitious vision and determined, committed leadership provide a clear sense of purpose for the school community.
- Detailed baseline data and subsequent formative assessments give a comprehensive picture of students' individual performance which helps them to make good progress relative to their capabilities.
- The strong and supportive partnership between school and parents ensures a shared awareness of how to enable students to move forward according to their specific need.
- The strong emphasis on academic as well as personal development conveys a message of high expectations, which are reflected in significant improvements in behavior and attendance.
- The innovative and challenging curriculum is relevant to students' individual education programs and is enhanced by modern technology and resources.
- Staff's effective teamwork across all the sites creates a climate of trust and respect in which students are nurtured and cared for.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish a more effective link between IEP goals and the learning targets planned in lessons to provide coherence in monitoring progress and consistency in practice in goal setting.
- Collate the extensive individual data in science and social studies to generate a subject overview to indicate students' on-going progress in relation to skills and competencies.
- Develop consistency in monitoring the work of the school through focused action planning relevant to staff responsibilities and accountabilities.
- Build upon the good instructional practice evident in some parts of the school to ensure that all teaching is differentiated to meet individual needs.

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 rigorous in collecting a wide range of information about student performance and progress in core subjects. Administrative and specialty staff analyze detailed profiles and spreadsheets of progress data to identify trends and areas for improvement. They disseminate a synopsis of this information to teachers on a regular basis. Uniformity in the compilation of student binders is achieved through school-wide data collection sheets and student profile sheets. Currently the detailed information in science and social studies has not been disaggregated to provide an overview of student performance in these subjects. Teachers across all sites are routinely provided with assessment calendars for alternate and standardized assessments students. Database programs such as Scantron performance series assessments generate learning objectives which have highlighted a need to improve reading comprehension for standardized assessed students. Staff also use the School-wide Information System [SWIS] conscientiously to provide an individual analysis indicating which behaviors are preventing students from achieving their full academic potential. The school has been proactive in its response to this data by successfully implementing a positive behavior modification program, 'Bridge to Success'. These exemplars indicate that staff have an extensive range of information on students' progress, attendance and social needs in order to plan their teaching.

The school is vigilant in meeting the specific needs of its many sub-groups. In addressing the various aspects of autism, teachers focus on monitoring language and work habits so that they can modify instruction where necessary. In a different context, the Academic Intervention Services [AIS] meet regularly and use a multi-disciplinary, collaborative approach to assess the impact of academic support upon individual need. The team's effective review of the personal intervention plan [PIP] referrals, which are based on State test scores and Scantron's performance series scores, benefit holdover students considerably.

Parents receive informative monthly progress reports as well as daily updates on their children's progress, through home/school communication books. Parents are appreciative of this on-going 'information pathway'. Communication is further enhanced through the use of phone logs, newsletters and e-mail facilities.

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 sets precise goals for students through their IEP which include an emphasis on reading, math and social competences. To facilitate this goal setting process, teachers use computer-based and web-based technology such as Achieve 3000, Read 180 and System 44 efficiently. The Brigance program serves as an assessment, curriculum guide and skills tracking system for alternate assessed students with language delays and effectively informs decisions regarding short-term and long-term goals for the students’ IEPs. Teachers also set targets for sustaining and improving behavior. Teachers routinely review academic and personal goals at the end of each marking period. This procedure is supplemented by an ongoing evaluation, through collaborative meetings of relevant staff to monitor the acquisition of IEP goals. Currently, specific objectives which have been identified in IEP’s are not transmitted rigorously to all class planning. The school sets challenging goals for all students in the core subjects and functional life skills, which build upon achievements and establish the next learning steps. In addition, the school identifies clear goals for different sub-groups, such as English language learners and gives particular focus to supporting girls, given the low number in the school. Generally, the analysis of sub-group progress is systematic and so teachers recognize and resolve underachievement quickly.

The school-wide goals set in the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan are the outcome of collaborative processes involving the administration, staff and parents. The action plan’s goals focus on specific weak areas, such as the need to improve writing skills in middle school students through the use of technology. The school leadership team is meticulous in monitoring progress towards goals specified in the plan, through monthly meetings and adjusts the action plan as necessary to meet stated objectives.

All staff promote high expectations through their individual and shared work in classrooms and discussions with parents. These expectations are reinforced through daily communication in student notebooks, parent coordinator newsletters, family weekend activities and open school conferences. Strong emphasis is placed upon encouraging students to attend school regularly. The school’s precise policy for staff and service providers ensures that parents are notified immediately about their children’s absence. In this way, the school encourages parents to become active partners in many aspects of their child’s 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 well developed.

The school provides a broad range of activities to promote students’ intellectual, emotional, academic and physical growth. Curriculum programs are carefully selected to align with State requirements as identified in core subjects, the arts and life skills. To widen students’ experiences the school ensures they are exposed to learning opportunities in art and music. The school’s innovative project-based learning approach enhances students’ understanding considerably by putting their work into real-life contexts. The range of projects has included learning about Water and Poverty

Summits, recycling projects and a food drive. In order to address flexibility in meeting students need a particular focus is placed on using technology. By using these resources, students can demonstrate acquired learning and assess progress towards meeting their goals. Eighth grade classes, for example, were part of an initiative to enhance the social studies curriculum and deepen students' understanding of history in a concrete, yet creative, manner. Students demonstrated their skill in using a range of technological devices to produce a newscast relating to a period of US history at the beginning of the 20th century. In addition, the school's effective technological support for alternate assessed students provides them with multi-sensory experiences that address a variety of learning styles. Interactive experiences are promoted by using applications such as Garageband, Imovie, and Photobooth. These approaches enable students to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of modalities. The administration is strategic in making its decisions about curriculum and instructional programs by ensuring they have an assessment capability. In this way, they support staff in planning their instruction to align with IEP goals and to include differentiated activities to meet student needs. However, in practice there is a degree of variability in achieving these objectives.

The administration and the school leadership team review the budget collaboratively to assess the impact of programs purchased. The data the school has collected indicates encouraging incremental gains being made by students across the range of initiatives. The school energetically pursues the search for additional resources to promote relevant and stimulating instruction for its students. For example in order to address the remediation of students it has purchased the Exemplars in Math program and Success Maker.

Harmonious relationships throughout the individual sites and classrooms promote positive environments for learning. Teachers work closely with paraprofessionals to operate as supportive teams in providing for 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 administrators strongly endorse professional development. As a result, many staff attend external training in the implementation of the extensive range of curriculum initiatives operating in the school. The school's thorough collation of details of staff participation in this training indicates distinct impact in improving student outcomes and supporting school-wide goals. The outcomes of lesson observations, teachers' self-assessment protocols and collaborative discussions with coaches and consultants enable administrators to form the basis of an individualized approach to professional training. An underlying focus for staff training is to increase their proficiency in using technology as an invaluable teaching tool and as a vehicle for implementing innovative curriculum programs. Teachers confirm that they value the support they receive from the administration in improving their teaching competencies. Mentoring procedures for new staff are particularly effective in this respect through the collaborative work with 'master teachers, and inter-class visitations. The administration actively supports staff participation in inquiry teams. Teachers from the 'elementary sites' are collaborating effectively to analyze assessment data, and modify and adapt student work to improve the youngest students' math awareness. As a result, pre-kindergarten children are being introduced to the foundation stages of the 'everyday math' program with a specific

emphasis on counting. A striking piece of anecdotal evidence is that a previously non-verbal student has now begun to count.

Teachers collaborate effectively with families and service providers, such as speech and occupational therapists, to provide an over-arching support program to address the specific needs of students. Individual students, who are struggling, receive timely and frequent interventions from the school counselors so that difficulties can be resolved. Parents strongly appreciate the nurturing values and actions of the school that are of such benefit to their children.

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.

Thorough data and management systems routinely monitor the school's work. The whole-school policy relating to student profiles and assessment sheets for example, represents a proactive approach to promoting consistency of practice throughout the sites. Currently however, the administrative team's practice of following through on action plans to check on implementation and amendments in the light of emerging evidence, is inconsistent. Where the monitoring process has been secure, the school has been able to identify the successes of programs such as 'System 44 and 'Read 180' in promoting students learning. Conversely, the school has modified its scheduling by recognizing the limitations of the Wilson program for its students and adjusting team teaching arrangements in math and ELA which were not productive. The formative assessments, which include Acuity, Scantron performance series and Brigance, are regularly administered to provide informative data that is used to monitor teaching outcomes. The findings of inquiry teams are also shared to raise faculty's awareness of research processes and how they can be used to improve performance. The findings of these sources of evidence enable the administrative staff and teachers to modify instructional programs and adapt as necessary. .

The cabinet team meets monthly to discuss and evaluate the school's progress towards meeting its wider goals. They evaluate the effectiveness of professional development systematically after a review of informal observations, formative assessments, intra-site visits and collaborative activities. Where necessary the principal is proactive in her response to identifying the need for additional support and training to facilitate school-wide objectives. This led to the school identifying a need to extend the use of ABLLS to provide more detailed information to support instruction.

All members of the school community value highly the principal's purposeful leadership. The principal's clear vision provides direction for the continuing development of the school. She takes steps to ensure this vision is shared by displaying relevant statements of expectations in classrooms and hallways. She also makes herself accessible to parents and staff in order to communicate how well the school is doing and what the next steps for improvement are. Parents appreciate this openness and they applaud the notable progress being made by their children.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Public School 17	△	➤	✓	+
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>	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			
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>	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			
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>	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			
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed