

# Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The New Children's School  
Early Childhood School 23  
2151 Washington Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10457

Principal: Carolyn Jones

Dates of review: November 17 – 18, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Sue Alton

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The New Children's School is an early childhood school with 587 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 2. The school population comprises 27% Black, 70% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 32% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 90.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility. This school is a barrier-free school that supports a number of programs specifically designed to meet the needs of a wide range of students. The special education students' needs range from learning disabilities to physical disabilities.

### Overall Evaluation

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

"This school aims for all our children to be above average – average isn't enough". This is the way several parents describe the high expectations of The New Children's School. Comments such as this exemplify the commitment and shared vision of the whole school community, led by a visionary principal and staff team.

The school has developed a broad, creative and very well-resourced curriculum which provides all students with access to an extensive and effective range of school-based and external support. Students enjoy school and want to attend. Careful planning and support ensure the diverse range of students make secure progress and are fully integrated into the life of the school. Extensive professional development ensures all staff develop their skills, in order to achieve personal and school goals.

The effective staff team uses data rigorously to plan, track and evaluate progress against long-term goals and to inform decision making. There are frequent opportunities for them to meet to share planning, share information and ideas in teams and across grades. However, processes for setting measurable, differentiated goals and timescales for achieving them are still being refined. The use of measurable, interim goals is new. Processes are developing to enable leaders and faculty to use these goals to record their evaluations and adjustments to plans more systematically, in order to support self-evaluation and school planning processes

Good progress has been made in all areas since the last Quality Review. However, the school policy for all teachers to use differentiated instruction is not consistent in all lessons to ensure that the differing needs of all students are met effectively.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The whole school community shares a vision for continued development and improvement and has a commitment to achieving it.
- Students enjoy a broad, creative and well-resourced curriculum.
- School-based and external organizations provide an extensive range of support which impacts significantly on those children and families receiving these services.
- Students with a wide range of needs are integrated effectively into the life of the school through careful planning and support.
- The school gathers a wide range of data to inform curriculum planning, track student progress and make adjustments to groupings and planning.
- All staff work as a team, using data to track the progress of individuals, classes, grades and groups against long-term goals.
- Extensive professional development opportunities focus on whole-school goals and are successful in helping teachers improve their instruction.

### What the school needs to improve

- Refine processes for setting measurable, differentiated learning goals, with differentiated plans and timescales for achieving them, and for evaluating progress.
- Ensure that all teachers use data consistently to differentiate instruction in all lessons to meet the individual needs of students.
- Refine systems to enable leaders and faculty to set systematically measurable interim goals and to record interim evaluations of data against these to inform instruction and adjustments to instruction and plans.

## 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.**

School leaders and faculty gather a wide range of summative and formative data in all core subjects, and for attendance and enrichment activities. Data collected includes analysis of tests, assessment using rubrics, portfolios of student work and learning logs. The data specialist maintains and manages the data conscientiously on an extensive database, which the school leaders and faculty analyze frequently. In addition, learning logs are effective in helping these young students understand their achievements and involve them actively in self-assessment at the beginning of instructional units.

Staff monitor and track student performance in all core subjects including physical education, dance and art. The school uses data systematically to identify strengths and areas for development, in order to plan improvement for the school and for individuals and groups of students. Thorough analysis identified progress in mathematics as stronger than reading and writing. As a result, reading and writing are a focus in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The school's analysis of available data enables it to track closely the performance of groups including English language learners and special education students. Staff use this information to adjust plans, regroup students and to plan further interventions

Students and families are provided with clear and regular feedback on student progress and "next steps" to support further improvements, although students cannot always articulate these. However, learning logs show students have a clear understanding of their learning needs and progress, through recorded discussions with teachers. Information for parents is worded carefully to ensure it can be understood and is translated into the home language where necessary.

**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.**

Student assessment on entry to school is used to support curriculum planning effectively based on previous knowledge and understanding and to track progress towards long-term goals. Standards-based rubrics in all subjects clearly support students' understanding of next steps in all grades. Weekly assessments track progress towards long-term goals at key milestones, and some interim goals are set, for example in reading. This newly introduced process is enabling the school to evaluate progress towards long-term goals more effectively. Data is used effectively to plan groups. In

most classes and subjects, instruction is differentiated to meet individual and group needs.

School leaders involve parents and teachers in school improvement planning. Teachers appreciate that as they develop their skills and expertise, they are encouraged to contribute more to this process. The evaluation of the long-term goals of the previous Comprehensive Educational Plan is used systematically to inform the next plan.

The school promotes a strong focus on personal responsibilities for learning and high expectations of behavior, attendance and academic performance, which it communicates clearly to students and families. Conferencing is well established and is enhanced by student learning logs, which support self-assessment effectively. These systems ensure that parents and students understand how much progress students have made and what needs to be done to achieve their goals. The school works very closely with parents to support students in achieving their goals and works hard to ensure parents are kept informed. An example of this is the creation of report cards for kindergarten parents which identify their child's progress on the continuum of New York standards. The school organizes a range of events and workshops to inform parents about the curriculum and how they can support their child at home. Attendance at these events is improving and those who attend speak highly of these opportunities.

**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 broad curriculum includes a variety of exciting programs including specialist science, art and dance, which engage students' interest. Students have numerous, stimulating opportunities to use specialist facilities including science, computer and art rooms. The carefully designed gymnasium is well equipped to meet the diverse physical needs of students. School leaders' thorough analysis of data informs their strategic organizational decisions to support student learning and to track progress. Staff are allocated time to meet regularly in teams to review and evaluate progress. Each program is planned carefully to meet the wide needs of all students, who are motivated through the school's focus on involving them actively in their learning. Attractive displays around the school show examples of high-quality student work and a variety of approaches to learning.

Teachers employ a range of assessment systems for most subject areas, which they use frequently to track progress and to adjust plans and groupings. In many effective lessons, planning is carefully matched to students' prior learning, the pace is swift and effective, targeted questioning encourages all students to contribute positively. Rubrics provide valuable support for these young students as they self-assess and identify learning goals at the beginning of units. However, differentiated instruction is not planned consistently across school.

Behavior and relationships are very good across the school. Students respect each other and parents speak with pride of the high expectations and commitment of all staff. Students enjoy school and want to attend and the school has systems which are successful in encouraging regular attendance. However, a number of students have specific medical needs, which impact on their regular attendance.

**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 strategic approach by the administration and cabinet to observe instruction and provide constructive feedback is very effective in ensuring continuous improvement. The principal uses this information to provide an extensive and varied range of professional development. Administration and cabinet track the impact of professional development systematically through further observations and discussions.

Over 20 teachers are new to the school this last year. The individual mentoring program both within and outside the school enables these teachers to settle quickly into the expectations of the school. One teacher in his third year described how, as a result of training and support, he feels sufficiently confident to "give back" and be part of the support process now for new staff.

The inquiry team focuses on students held back in grade 1, analyzing possible reasons for this, based on information from last year. Together, the team uses data to focus on skills which are missing for individual students and identifies specific strategies and interventions. The team works closely with class teachers to identify teaching strategies and classroom support mechanisms, which ensure a consistency of approach in class. Data shows that these strategies have already had a positive impact on student achievement.

An extensive range of services and agencies both internal and external is available to students and their families, which impact positively on student self-esteem and progress. These agencies work together closely around individual student needs adhering closely to the framework provided in the school guidance plan.

**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.**

School plans focus clearly on student outcomes across the core curriculum and involving the whole school community. The administration and faculty use data effectively to identify individual, group and school needs to consolidate whole-school planning. Long-term goals are an accurate reflection of what the school needs to do to ensure sustained levels of performance and to further improve as a school. School plans include relevant success criteria and strategies and actions for a range of personnel in order to achieve the goals. However, school plans do not consistently include objectively measurable interim goals against which to measure progress, although computerized systems are beginning to be used to support this process. Thus, the evaluation of school goals is often simply a reflection on what has happened, rather than being a strategic, forward-looking process to support future goal setting and planning.

Teachers are confident in using data to track student achievement and evaluate progress to modify and adjust groups. Teams are given time to meet regularly to plan and to review plans. They use this information strategically to make adjustments to

plans, although these evaluations are not always systematically recorded against interim goals. In addition, not all teachers use data consistently to inform differentiated instruction.

The administration and cabinet are very focused on ensuring that data systems and processes are relevant to their curriculum and students. The data specialist has led staff to develop standards-based rubrics to track achievement and identify next step. Staff use these rubrics conscientiously and effectively to evaluate progress and to adjust groupings as well as identifying students for targeted support.

The principal has established an ethos of accountability and respect where all staff take responsibility for their work, communicating closely with students and parents in order to support students in achieving their learning goals. The whole school community is focused on the school vision which, as the principal says, “we are living every day.” Parents see the school as a “hidden gem” and a school which they say “empowers our kids for the future”.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: The New Children's School</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, DYO, 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>				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...	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>				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...	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>			X	

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