

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Basheer Qusim School

Elementary School 053

**360 East 168th Street
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Collin Wolfe

Dates of review: November 17 - 18, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Denis Pittman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Basheer Quism School is an elementary school with 1332 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 38% Black, 61% Hispanic and 1% White. The student body includes 32% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 50.4% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49.6%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 90.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 88% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school has established effective systems for analyzing its performance data particularly in relation to some, but not all, of the core subjects. It uses this data appropriately to identify priorities for action in improving the achievement of students. The principal leads the school well. He effectively implements his clear vision for the school, using his ability to create relevant organizational systems to address these priorities. This is evident in the purposeful scheduling of common planning time, for example, and the distributed leadership of different grade teams to secure improvement. Assistant principals use common procedures to evaluate the school's work, which helps to establish a degree of consistency.

The school provides a broad curriculum supplemented with a range of cluster programs to interest students. They also provide a variety of enrichment programs so as to engage students in their learning. The involvement of community organizations and the extra support given through such activities as the extended day and holiday programs for students are particularly strong features. Parents and students are appreciative of the opportunities that are available to them. The school effectively communicates to parents the progress made by their children, but this communication does not always include a broad profile of achievement in skills and competencies for all core subjects.

Teachers collaborate well in order to improve the curriculum content and their instruction. These shared practices are helpful in promoting a greater consistency in the quality of teaching. The school leadership team recognizes that this process continues to be a "work in progress" so as to identify learning goals in all subjects. The grouping of classes according to their achievement level still necessitates relevant differentiation so that all students are appropriately challenged. The school continues to effectively address the issue of differentiating instruction through an overarching professional development plan. The monitoring and evaluation procedures are well focused so as to be able to identify the specific needs of teachers in promoting professional development needs.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is systematic and effective, which promotes student achievement.
- Professional development is carefully aligned to the overarching goals of the school and also reflects the specific individual needs of teachers.
- English language learners make good progress because of relevant curriculum programs and focused individual support.
- The curriculum has good breadth and is effectively complemented by a detailed arts program and enrichment activities.
- The consistency of practice in relation to classroom environments, data collection and common teaching strategies has a positive impact on students' learning and progress.
- The productive partnership with parents and the resulting support the school receives helps to promote student engagement and sustain attendance levels.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop and sustain innovative procedures to enhance the progress of high-achieving students.
- Build upon existing good practice to ensure that the evaluation of student progress and the determination of learning goals are evident for all core subjects.
- Incorporate the specification of accountability and timeframes in school action planning.
- Enable the transition of instruction to focus on the learning outcomes of lessons and engage students in the process of self assessment.

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 has established detailed procedures for collating and analyzing baseline data in order to categorize students into performance ranges and subsequent classes. Performance data in relation to English language arts and math, in consequence, is particularly thorough, but the school is also able to regularly monitor achievement in science and social studies through the generation of its own testing materials. The analysis for reading and writing provides a clear picture of how individuals and groups of students are performing and progressing. Each student is provided with a portfolio in which their work is routinely collected. This collection of sample pieces provides the substantive basis for which class teachers compile their formative assessments of students. Yet, the collection of data in relation to the arts program is not as systematic as other subject areas.

Teachers maintain substantial data recording systems tracking students' progress. The school has a comprehensive, common system for recording information. The monitoring of individual progress on a day-to-day basis includes conference notes and running reading records. In this way they are able to keep a check on how each student is progressing and what steps they need to take in order to improve. The consistency in data collection systems enables teachers in respective grades to compare progress between classes. Administrators use this information, combined with other assessment results to organize support to meet the individual needs of specific cohorts of students such as English language learners and students with special educational need. This process enables administrators to identify specific issues or trends and take action to address them. For example, the analysis of data for English language learners in grade 2 showed that students were making insufficient progress. The school subsequently was able to instigate push-in support and provide professional development for the teachers concerned.

Parents are encouraged to come to the school to discuss their child's progress and talk about any issues of concern. Parents are able to see staff during preparation periods, which is in addition to the normal conferencing arrangements and workshop meetings. The celebration of consistently good attendance by students is something which parents willingly take part in. Parents and students confirm that they have a good understanding of their next learning steps, particularly in relation to reading and math, but that it is not as strong currently for other areas of the curriculum.

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 principal provides the focus and direction for the identification of whole-school goals. To this end, he is ably supported by the four assistant principals and the leadership team. The overall trends, as identified in the analysis of data related to performance in subject areas and those of specific subgroups, leads to identifying goals within the Comprehensive Educational Plan. A major focus of the plan is on promoting performance goals and subsequent achievement in the core subjects. There is a purposeful commitment to emphasizing key State standards and alignment with curriculum requirements. At the beginning of the year, the assistant principals appropriately conduct goal-setting conferences with teachers in their respective grades to discuss performance levels and develop instructional action plans for all students. In this way teaching goals seamlessly feed into student goals. In the context of the latter, the school has introduced the idea of informing students of their scale score in tests and then working with them in identifying projected gains. A synthesis of this data is posted in classrooms and students are able to explain the significance of this scale score and the incremental increases they would need to make to get to the next level of achievement. This process of familiarizing students with this deeper level of performance information is pertinent to older students, but is not supplemented by more self-assessment opportunities. The current work of the inquiry team is focused on the testing grades (grade 4) with a view to identifying gaps in conceptual understanding of “at-risk” students. Diagnostic analysis of the data for the sample group is centered on math and English language arts competencies in order to inform instructional practice.

The school enrollment has a high proportion of English language learners and, in consequence, has an appropriate focus in promoting language and numeracy acquisition, particularly for children in the earlier grades. However there is still an emphasis on developing goals and targets in science and social studies, which is particularly evident and effective in the dual language program. However, students and parents are less clear about the skills and competencies in these and arts areas of the curriculum. The principal is aware of the need to develop a more refined profile of student skills in these areas for parents. Nevertheless the school works extremely hard in building effective communication with parents in order to notify them about the progress of the children. Newsletters and report cards are appropriately presented reflecting the fact that a large proportion of parents are themselves English language learners and need support and guidance. To that end, the school plays a significant role in supporting its parents through workshops.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school has a well-organized, broad curriculum that enables ongoing assessment opportunities in all classrooms. The school has undertaken development work to promote relevant links between subjects, such as those between science and social studies, through project-based themes such as ecology and nature in New York City. The subsequent group work and research enables students to work at their own level of

understanding and competence. Teachers are aware that despite the creation of homogeneous classes, instructional activities need to reflect achievement levels and learning styles. This differentiated approach promotes relevant pathways for students to achieve their learning goals. The progress made by students with special education need is a reflection of the differentiated strategies, which are then successfully used by teachers. Although, the same emphasis is not consistently given to the instruction of higher achieving students.

The principal effectively enhances the learning opportunities of students by efficient budgeting and acquiring external funding. The subsequent resources are contributory factors in promoting attractive, stimulating learning environments in classrooms. Classroom libraries have been extended and further developed, laptop carts are available for classes on each floor level and science experiment kits have been purchased to enhance inquiry learning in lessons. In this way the school is successfully adding greater coherence and depth to the instruction it is giving its students. The evaluation and assessment of these developments is complemented by appropriate and shared rubrics.

The learning environment survey indicates increasing levels of trust between the school and parents. Parents are very appreciative of the open communication which exists between them and the school. This is particularly pertinent given their limited competence in English. To that end newsletters and progress report profiles are specifically designed to accommodate the individual needs of families. The extensive workshops provided by the school, not only deal with curriculum matters such as math awareness, but also provide English classes for parents, which significantly promotes the feeling of a “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 principal determines the overarching professional development program, which is geared to the specific goals and objectives of the school. The program reflects training in the understanding, collection and use of data to inform instruction. Teachers are held accountable to this baseline requirement and are regularly monitored through classroom observations and examination of their work. Within the context of specific grades assistant principals work with individual teachers to determine teaching goals and, by implication, professional development requirements. In this way there is an appropriate, differentiated staff development plan. The school has a detailed mentoring program for new staff. A particularly innovative feature is the concept of “apprenticeship” training, which enables the new staff to join the school for a period before they take up their appointment so that they become acclimated to the culture of the school. New teachers confirm that this is a very helpful and supportive process for them.

Regular lesson observations provide information about the professional requirements of each teacher. The assistant principals appropriately respond to these specific needs and teachers are given mentoring support from instructional coaches. The school is gradually changing its focus in professional development to that of evaluating learning outcomes of students in lessons. However the orientation of most teachers is still on refining their teaching strategies and techniques. The incidence of class visitations by staff is not a strong feature, but the sharing of ideas, through regular planning sessions, is a productive area of staff development.

Support services provide a helpful resource for students and their families in enhancing their personal and academic growth. These services are valued by parents. The school supports its local community well through a holiday academy program. The school opens its doors during the holidays so that its students have somewhere to go. Students who opt to attend this program are provided with meaningful activities relevant to their specific needs. Community organizations provide a range of enrichment activities in the arts and ballroom dancing.

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 principal and assistant principals monitor student progress regularly through scheduled meetings. The main focus for this work is the grade level meeting where faculty formulate goals and action plans in relation to English language arts, math, science and social studies. These goals are not so clearly articulated for other curriculum areas such as art and physical education. The subsequent action plans which are produced do not include sufficiently clearly defined interim checkpoints so that progress towards specified objectives can be rigorously evaluated. For example, this could relate to the impact of a shift towards project-based learning or the integrated curriculum (English language arts and social studies).

The principal effectively uses the array of incoming data about the school to modify improve practice. The school has responded proactively to the last Quality Review and there is good evidence that they have made progress on these issues. This is especially relevant to the assessment and monitoring of progress of students with special educational need and the increasing cohort of children coming from other countries. The administration effectively uses data to modify instruction. For example, the analysis of the performance of high-achieving students led to extending classroom libraries to accommodate theme-based activities and reduce the emphasis on guided reading for them. A subsequent modification was made to the professional development plan to address strategies for dealing with and promoting project-based learning.

The principal has a clear vision for the continuing development of the school and works assiduously to achieve this objective. To this end he is ably supported by his assistant principals who successfully convey these objectives to the remainder of the faculty. Staff and the local community "buy in" to this shared vision.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Basheer Qusim School	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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, 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.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	▶	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X				
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	▶	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher's instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X			
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X				
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X			
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	▶	✓	+			
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher's instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X				
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X				
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X				
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	▶	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed