



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Norwood Heights School

Elementary School 056

341 East 207th Street

Bronx

NY 10467

Principal: Priscilla Sheeran

Dates of review: month November 12 - 13, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Louise Kapner

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Norwood Heights School is an elementary school with 586 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 15% Black, 53% Hispanic, 9% White, and 23% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 92.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 81% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Norwood Heights School provides a welcoming and happy environment where students enjoy coming to learn and parents appreciate being partners in their child's education. Excellent lines of communication keep them well informed of the school's programs and expectations for their child. The principal is a very effective leader who, with a very dedicated staff, is committed to the success and well-being of each student. She knows each student by name and is highly visible around the school. As a result, parents, children and staff feel there is a tone of mutual respect, a feeling of "family" and a "positive culture".

The school effectively collects, records and analyzes a wide range of data in most subjects to monitor the performance and progress of individuals and groups of students. There is still room to extend this depth of analysis, to gain an even greater understanding of student work to help inform instruction. The school recognizes this as a need. Teachers use a wide range of data to identify students' strengths and needs and therefore have a good understanding of what they have to do to improve learning outcomes. Consistently good classroom practice engages students in suitable learning activities. Staff members continually participate in planning meetings, conversations, and well-matched professional development activities to enhance their skills. They use student work to effectively guide their conversations, but some good ideas are not shared adequately to support consistent implementation of best practices. Teachers use very high quality signals to guide and grade student work. Students are actively involved in the learning process and set individual interim- and long-term goals so they know what they are working to achieve. In some classes, students write reflections to help them evaluate their learning, and next steps to performing better. Teachers use this information to help them meet students' needs. However, teacher response is not always visible on displayed pieces to motivate students even further.

The school has developed a very good integrated curriculum with strong links between core subjects. For example, the art teacher used the math concept of patterns as grade 1 students worked to complete a project. Successful collaborations support student learning and social development. Partnerships with arts organizations provide high quality programs including vocal and musical instrument programs. A grade 5 student is very excited about continuing to learn to play the violin, an activity that he began last year. The principal is highly self-reflective and constantly looks at student work to gauge the success of instructional programs and organizational decisions. Suitable changes are implemented with a clear purpose of raising student achievement.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and staff work hard to use assessments to understand and monitor performance and progress of individuals and groups of students.
- The school regularly communicates high expectations to students and their parents.
- The school's curriculum gives students extensive opportunities to participate in all core subjects.
- A good and respectful school tone and very effective partnerships with community organizations support the academic and personal growth of students.
- Professional development is well planned and differentiated to meet the needs of teachers and to ensure continuing improvement in classroom practice.
- The school is highly self-reflective and continually looks at student work to revise instructional practices and make organizational decisions to improve learning outcomes.
- Students are highly engaged and motivated and enjoy learning because of the quality of instruction.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the depth of analysis of data in all core subjects to gain additional insights into student performance and progress to help guide instruction.
- Strengthen teachers' responses to all student work, to reflect level of performance, provide guiding comments and to convey next steps.
- Create further opportunities to enable staff to share best practices.

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 regularly collects and analyzes a wide range of data in most core subjects. As a result, it has a clear understanding of the performance and progress of individuals, groups of students, by grade and by school. The school is rightly proud of the progress of their English language learners, a majority of whom no longer require English as a second language instruction by grade 5. This level of data scrutiny is not yet fully extended. The school recognizes this and is now focusing on students' results on the social studies exam, to guide back-mapping of instruction into all grades. The principal very effectively organizes longitudinal assessment information and demographic data into concise formats that enable her and her staff to plan successfully to meet the needs of their students. Classroom teachers and interventions specialists build on this good practice and, through highly detailed data collection systems, record and monitor students' progress on a daily basis. This enables them to "know my kids well and more quickly" and therefore make immediate adjustments to instruction. This monitoring practice effectively includes students in their own self-assessment. Early-grade students complete daily progress charts following intervention services, and upper-grade students use "Reflections on my Learning: What kind of Learner am I?" to analyze their response to a lesson. As a result, students know how they are doing and next steps needed to improve their outcomes, and teachers use this information to guide their planning.

The school very effectively and regularly shares information with parents. The mandated quarterly report card process has been improved upon. Parents get to keep their child's report card. They also receive comprehensive beginning- middle- and end-of-year reports that highlight key elements in their child's performance and progress, relative to State standards, attendance and classroom requirements, thus enabling parents to monitor their child's progress. Parents are encouraged to discuss any concerns with staff and to share information about their child's needs. They echoed how, "Each parent is very well informed and we know our part in our child's education."

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.

The principal is keenly aware of the importance of aligning her performance goals with those of the school to ensure a congruent approach to improving student outcomes. She works well with the entire school community reviewing data in the development of the Comprehensive Education Plan, so they know what the school is trying to achieve, and setting measurable interim- and long-term goals for students in all core subjects.

She also seeks the advice of parents about the school's priorities and, as a result of parent input, classes were established in English as a second language. Teachers meet one-on-one with the principal and comprehensively review data to set explicit differentiated goals for what they expect each student to master and next steps to help them achieve. These plans are reviewed regularly and new information is used to "refocus" instruction. Pacing calendars and units of study provide teachers with good benchmarks to monitor instructional progress, and interim and curriculum-embedded assessments enable them to adequately monitor the progress of students towards each target. Weekly grade-level meetings provide a valuable forum, at which time teachers look at student work to assess progress and to plan. They also use this information to self-assess their instructional practice. Each staff member completes a monthly survey of "Good Teaching is All About Good Planning" to see how they are doing and to identify areas in which they need further help. Teachers use excellent instructional and grading rubrics to guide all student assignments. A grade 2 teacher very cleverly developed a daily reading-assignment journal and rubric sheet that is pasted in students' books so they know what to do with their just-right books. However, displayed student work does not consistently have teacher comments, or leveling, to enable students to continually know how they are doing and to motivate them even further.

Teachers provide students and their families with clear information about what students need to study. Parents sign a reading log each evening confirming that their child read for 30 minutes. Charts in classrooms monitor each student and whole-class progress towards meeting the goal of reading minimally 25 books. Every student is involved in identifying areas in which he or she wants to do better. They use their year-to-year and yearlong student portfolios as a measure of their work, to help them set specific next steps. A student expressed how setting his own goals "makes me feel better," "tells me what I need to work on," and "what I accomplished at the end of the year." Those students not on track receive a wide range of academic intervention and/or mandated services that are very well matched to their needs. Early-morning lower-grade "Breakfast Club" students eagerly monitor their own daily progress towards attaining weekly learning goals.

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 has a well-established integrated curriculum in all core subjects that meets the needs of the students. Suitable supplemental materials are varied and used well to support learning for lower- and higher-performing students. Classroom libraries are abundantly stocked and have books by genre, level and author to support the school's integrated curriculum approach. The principal is enthusiastic about creating opportunities that encourage positive attitudes and a high regard for learning. She speaks proudly of the extensive arts program and broad variety of trips in which students participate to extend their learning. Students receive high levels of support to develop mature attitudes, and recently implemented interventions for grade 5 students are impacting positively on their behavior and work habits. Teachers show great skill in shaping instruction that is engaging and motivating to meet the needs of individual students. Their use of manipulatives, just-right books and differentiated learning rubrics shows their attention to the various learning styles and abilities of their students. Classroom teachers weave art and physical education activities into lessons, and dedicated subject teachers provide explicit instruction. Students readily agree that the

“different activities make learning fun.” A grade 5 student spoke of how she is using a read-aloud rubric to help her prepare for an upcoming competition, hoping to win first prize. Teachers use installed smartboards expertly to engage students in learning. The technology teacher monitored students’ responses to math problems as they remotely entered their answers.

The principal faces many organizational challenges as the school is extremely overcrowded and the majority of classes have over the allowed number of students. She adapts and schedules her space creatively to maximize use of each area. Many specialists deliver services in areas that are not ideal, but students are happily engaged in learning. Her budgeting acumen is reflected by the extensive array of academic interventions services and enrichment programs she is able to provide to students, and the excellent resources available to ensure that the school meets its goals in raising student achievement.

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.

Teachers are very reflective and evaluative about their practice, with a clear focus on improving student learning. They review their teaching monthly and written summaries highlight areas in which they need additional support to help students learn. The principal is very insightful as she uses this information, along with outcomes from informal walkthroughs and formal observations, to provide suitable support for teachers in areas identified as needing further help. Teachers welcome this assistance as a way to ensure they are able to meet the goals set for students. Staff incorporate many of their colleagues’ insights into their planning to ensure that good instruction is consistent intra- and inter-grade. However, teachers sometimes lack opportunities for sharing and incorporating good ideas into their classroom practice.

The good work of last year’s inquiry team with grade 5 students in the area of math operations is being expanded to grade 4. The team is very pleased that 14 out of 16 students made at least one-year’s progress. As a result, they are using professional development activities to share the successful practices with all staff. This work has also encouraged other teachers to begin to implement the strategies and become involved in the inquiry work to raise student outcomes. Professional book-club discussions, and opportunities to attend off-site workshops and school-based professional development, extend teachers’ well-varied activities to enhance their skills.

The school values the contribution of the related service providers who work closely with staff to support students’ personal development. Counselors often visit classrooms to engage students in conversations around good choices. Highly effective collaborations accelerate student academic and personal growth. Through ‘Urban Voices’ students are engaged in learning to sing and are part of a culminating choral production. Staff from ‘Asphalt Green’ visit the school and work with students to develop students’ social skills and sense of fair play, while building personal character.

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 principal is highly reflective about school practice and continually looks at students' outcomes to guide next steps, and this has been conveyed effectively in the school's self-evaluation. She recognizes that, "If all students move a little the school makes a lot of progress." To accomplish this, excellent monitoring and evaluation processes are in place to make sure the school works on all levels, and suitable changes are made to maximize student learning. As a result of last year's success with grade 1 students in the 'Breakfast Club', 50% of whom were able to move up to grade level, the early-morning program has been expanded to grade 2 and English language learners. The Progress Report, Quality Review, Comprehensive Education Plan, Learning Environment Survey and principal performance document are used well as established guidelines for monitoring school performance and progress.

Weekly grade conferences engage teachers in effective review of student work and classroom practice to ensure individuals and classes are progressing and to make necessary changes to improve learning outcomes. Minimally, every two weeks academic intervention specialists use excellent data collection systems to review the impact of their focused support with individuals and small groups of students. Daily monitoring occurs for lower-grade students in early-morning "Breakfast Club" programs. As a result, instructional strategies are flexible and modified as needed, and students who make progress move out of the group, creating opportunities for other students who might need additional support. A high level of conversation takes place between out-of-classroom support personnel and teachers to ensure congruence of instruction.

Teachers monitor their own plans and instructional practices through an effective monthly self-assessment. This allows them to reflect on what is working and where they need additional help or resources to be successful practitioners to help students learn. The principal's involvement in this process ensures that immediate modifications and support are forthcoming. As a result, professional development and in-class support are suitably differentiated to meet the needs of individuals, while relevant whole-school activities engage all staff in learning best practices.

Students in the school continue to make progress and the principal recognizes there is "so much that we can do" to further improve students' learning outcomes. The school's priorities are clearly set out for the entire school community. All members are actively involved in ensuring that each incremental step builds on best practices, to provide students with every opportunity to succeed in a safe, respectful environment.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Norwood Heights	△	▶	✓	+
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, 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