

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Bronx School of Cultured Pearls

**Elementary School 073
1020 Anderson Avenue
Bronx
NY 10452**

Principal: Jean Mirvil

Dates of review: November 17 - 18, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Richard Woolf

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Bronx School of Cultured Pearls is an elementary school with 901 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 29% Black, 70% Hispanic, 0.8% White and 0.2% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 90.0%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 87% eligibility. The school occupies one large monolithic building with a separate construction housing the youngest students. Traveling between the two buildings, for both staff and students, is not ideal as students can become unsettled.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal's leadership and management is a key element in how the school is currently progressing. In a relatively short space of time, he has shown the school community the value of believing in young people and the importance of nurturing their minds. Teachers express how he enables them to feel empowered to teach. Parents feel his high expectations permeate throughout the school and this is increasing the level of parental participation in its life. Rapidly improving rates of attendance are an indicator of how students and their families are valuing education more. The school is a safe secure and vibrant place in which learning is improving.

The school has a good understanding of the part data plays in the setting of goals and driving instruction. This is particularly the case in English language arts and math. However, the school does not have that level of analysis in other core subjects, especially science and social studies. Nonetheless, teachers do use a number of differentiated activities to challenge their students across the curriculum. The inquiry team is helping teachers with this area of their work. However, they have yet to expand it to look at appropriate ways of challenging the more able students in the school. A number of external organizations support the school by reaching out to students in providing them with extra-curricular activities, Saturday programs and vacation events. This is helping the school greatly as they strive to improve student learning through a more engaging approach.

The school has a number of self-set goals to reach by the end of this academic year. These goals are challenging but realistic. The school has yet to develop strong systems of action planning with clear monitoring structures for staff to develop their individual work in relation to the school's overall goals. In conjunction with this, student goal-setting procedures in subjects other than English language arts and math are not sufficiently advanced. The principal acknowledges the importance of developing closer monitoring strategies as the school continues to challenge itself and improve the learning opportunities of its young people.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The leadership of the principal and his vision for the school's future can be seen throughout the entire building.
- The school has in place good systems for the recording and analysis of data to inform student learning in English language arts and math.
- The school has rich partnerships with external organizations that enhance student learning and well-being.
- As a result of higher expectations, the culture of the school has changed dramatically with more students than ever before attending on a regular basis.
- Teachers are increasingly using data to inform and differentiate their instruction across an expanding curriculum.

What the school needs to improve

- Devise ways of challenging the more able students through techniques developed within the inquiry team.
- Develop for teachers the same sophistication of data use in all subject areas as seen currently in English language arts and math.
- Ensure all teacher action plans deriving from the school's overall goals follow the same format and that they are monitored closely.
- Ensure all students have a clear understanding of their personal goals in subjects other than English language arts and math.
- Develop strategies to enable the administration to monitor the progress of students in all core subjects.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school uses data well in analyzing student performance as it relates to the teaching of English language arts and math. However, the same level of sophistication does not occur with other core subjects and specifically in science and social studies. The data analysis in reading and writing is particularly significant and, in all grade levels, students are progressing. There is a similar pattern emerging in math, which has been an area of concern in previous years. There are a high number of English language learners. The school meets their needs very well through a program for teaching English as a second language which aims to prepare them to access the more formal curriculum. The special education students achieve well and consistently earn the school additional credits in external examinations.

The school provides parents with regular feedback on the progress of their individual students. Both students and parents are aware of the importance of the report card in helping to improve learning outcomes. Parents feel able to contact teachers at any time for updates of their children's progress. They greatly appreciate this opportunity as they know see themselves as integral to the learning process and improving the students' learning. They have a greater understanding of learning goals and next-steps learning than ever before and this is helping to improve overall student outcomes. The school tracks students' performance and progress in a number of different ways. They use systems like Acuity and Achieve 3000 that are diagnostic in outcome and provide teachers with specific areas to tackle any deficiencies in their teaching. Likewise, the analysis of all data helps in the identification of trends in student learning. This approach has been most effective in comparing the relative strengths and weaknesses between both ethnic and gender groups in terms of the learning process. This level of tracking across all students is very strong in relation to refining the delivery of English language arts and math but there is still insufficient analysis in other core subjects.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

There are clear procedures in place for setting goals within the school. Numerous members of the school community that includes parents, teachers and students make up the senior leadership team. This group focuses on developing the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan goals. In developing the goals, there is a very good process in place to scrutinize all previous plans and data analysis. The principal's

aspirational target of “73% increase per year, it being the number of the school” causes much amusement. However, that one statement is proving to be invaluable in moving the school forward as staff and parents realize the importance of effective goal setting. Therefore, the school’s goals arise from the analysis of the specific needs of the students and the best ways to improve their learning. This is very much the case for the teaching of English language arts and math but further development needs remain within other subject areas. The students are very clear on the goals they set for themselves in English language arts and math but they seem not to have the same clarity within science and social studies. The school does not yet have in place a system by which all teachers have their own personalized action plans that effectively demonstrates how their contribution and teaching adds to the achievement of the overall school goals.

The inquiry team includes a wide cross-section of staff including the data specialist. The team has a clear idea of how to use data to service students in greatest need. Teachers welcome the input the team gives them when deciding the most appropriate course of action to improve student learning. In developing its understanding of the needs of all students, there is now an opportunity for the team to consider how they can challenge the more able students. Parental expectation has never been higher. This results from a principal who, through the staff, is adamant that the children are capable of learning and achieving highly in all things they attempt. Parents acknowledge this as a real strength of the school and a motivational message for the future.

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 is delivering the mandated State curriculum effectively. Teachers refer to particular standards when instructing their students. Through their collaborative grade level meetings, teachers adjust the curriculum to accommodate the needs of its students, although challenging the most able is still an area for development. The teaching of students in dual language French and Spanish is an interesting venture that parents welcome as evidence of a curriculum decision to stretch and challenge certain groups of students. It is currently successful in achieving that challenge

Teachers have a range of helpful assessment tools that enable them to group their students according to need. They use this information to differentiate their teaching. However, the school does not yet use the inquiry team’s methods and style of working to challenge its most able students. Teachers regularly assess students and this feeds into the six-weekly report cards that they share with parents to demonstrate progress and adjust learning goals. For the most part teaching is engaging and students enjoy their work. One student said that the work was really challenging since the new principal had arrived, but she liked it that way. The students feel they are learning, make good progress and enjoy working in groups. The principal invites all staff to participate in the decision-making process in relation to resources. As a result, the school now has a range of appropriate resources that is enabling teachers to improve student learning and understanding.

The school is very responsive to data that affects its students. Despite some very positive remarks within the last Learning Environment Survey, the principal is still not satisfied with some areas, for example, in terms of communication but this is changing

over the course of the current school year. Parents comment how driven he is in setting high standards and expectations for every person who is involved in the school. The outcome is dramatic in terms of an increasing level of student attendance, a reduction in incidents of inappropriate behavior and over 95% of students now wearing the school uniform. This school has respect for adults and students alike. Consequently, it is evolving as a place where the school community feels safe, secure and able to learn and progress.

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 proficient.

The principal and assistant principals undertake regular formal and informal lesson observations. The purpose of the visits is to provide teachers with an ongoing dialogue as to the progress they make in educating their students. The administration conducts lesson observations with a particular focus. Teachers are aware of this focus and welcome the constructive feedback they receive as being positive in helping them progress. Following from the observations a number of professional development activities arise to assist teachers in their instruction. Staff acknowledge that changes this year in professional development, following a survey of their individual learning needs, are most welcome in enhancing their teaching. New staff benefit from a range of supportive activities that clearly focus on acquainting them with the school's "rules and regulations". This system of close support continues until staff themselves no longer openly seek it.

The school's inquiry team is an integral part of school life and proving most helpful in moving forward teacher understanding of data-driven instruction. Teachers meet regularly in grade-level teams to discuss strategies to enhance student learning. In addition, teachers form their own empowerment, or E, teams. These teams of likeminded teachers explore educational issues relating to the development of their students. Over the last year, these groups are responsible for providing staff with specific expectations and guidelines for teaching across the curriculum. The principal gives all teachers the opportunity to learn from their colleagues. A planned program of intervisitation is in place and teachers feel this is a positive venture in improving their own teaching, as its delivery is always supportive and developmental.

The school has the support of a number of outside organizations as it strives to strengthen each student's learning opportunities. Organizations such as Woodycrest, Children for Children and Highbridge Coalition provide expertise and additional staff to meet the learning, social and emotional needs of the students. In addition, the Welcome Parent Center provides parents with workshops to understand how their own children learn and help them gain further academic qualifications for themselves.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal and senior colleagues collect data on a regular basis to demonstrate progress of students. However, this depth of approach to the monitoring of progress for each student does not extend to all core subject areas. The school is developing whole-school action plans but to date the monitoring of progress in achieving its goals is less rigorous than in other aspects of its work. This links in with the development and monitoring of individual teacher action plans. The principal acknowledges an improved process of monitoring as having the potential to be a powerful tool in establishing interim goals and checkpoints.

The school's leaders are cognizant of the need to be reflective. They use a range of qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions in advancing the school. A good example comes from the last Quality Review, as the implementation of its recommendations is now part of an already embedded culture of improvement. The administration use formal and informal observations to support a better understanding of how teachers benefit from their individualized professional development plans to progress their students' learning.

The principal has a clear and strong vision for the school. The sharing of this amongst the teachers allows them to subscribe to a school that is becoming more challenging of itself, its parents and the wider community. The school accurately assesses its strengths and areas for development. The Comprehensive Educational Plan goals are appropriate but challenging, therefore, as the school journeys on the next phase of its development in making this school the school of choice for the immediate community.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Bronx School of Cultured Pearls	△	➤	✓	+
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, DY0, 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