



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Sidney Silverstein Little Sparrow School

Elementary School 088

1340 Sheridan Avenue

Bronx

NY 10456

Principal: Melinda Hyer

Dates of review: November 17 – 18 , 2008

Lead Reviewer: Alvin Jeffs

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Sydney Silverstein Little Sparrow School is an elementary school with 285 students from kindergarten through grade 3. The school population comprises 40% Black, 59% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 35% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 91.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 88.8% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Little Sparrow is a school that made significant progress in raising student achievement in a short space of time. Students and parents alike attest to the openness and commitment of staff. They say that the school is “wonderful”, “just like a big family” and a “fun place to be”. Above all, this is a school where staff know each one of the students very well indeed. This means that there is a clear idea of each student’s academic and personal needs.

Strategic planning is thorough. School leaders and faculty use data well to monitor regularly the goals set annually for the school. The principal and assistant principal have developed an excellent team of coaches and lead teachers who assist staff in developing the skills of data analysis, target setting and differentiated planning within English language arts and math. These skills are now evident in social studies and science. All staff employ these skills on a regular basis, some with a very high degree of proficiency, some more slowly. This is partly because the school has not provided teachers with sufficient opportunities to share good practice in conferencing and target setting.

The school has developed a strong individualized professional development program that addresses teachers’ current professional and career needs well. There is now a strong culture of data analysis, planning and flexibility within every class. This reflects the school’s strategic goals and the excellent target-setting practices employed in the school’s approach to self-evaluation and in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The school has yet to build on this good practice in assisting teachers to produce precise interim and long-term learning goals, particularly during discussions with senior staff at the start of the year.

Data relating to most aspects of school life is efficiently collected, analyzed well and acted upon at all levels within the school. However, not all of the systems have been in place long enough to assess their full impact on student learning and performance levels across the school. Indications, based on interim assessments early in the academic year, are that these systems are beginning to contribute well to the raising of student achievement levels. However, without clear timeframes the school is not in a position to evaluate the impact of new initiatives on the progress of all sub-groups.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Strategic planning is thorough, building well on a strong bank of data, setting interim goals and reviewing outcomes on a regular basis to achieve the school's vision.
- Staff collaborate extremely effectively to convert strategic goals, such as the increased use of data, into practical classroom procedures, which accelerate student progress.
- A strong professional development program, allied with the development of inquiry teams and strong feedback from lesson observations have successfully helped teachers to utilize data to improve lesson planning.
- Most teaching is of a high standard, showing a commitment to high achievement and a very real personal interest in all students.
- Students show great maturity in working together, talking to visitors and identifying their own strengths and weaknesses.
- Parents value highly the safe environment of the school and the care shown to their children by all adults within the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Analyze the achievement of ethnic sub-groups to check that new curriculum initiatives are having the desired impact across the full range of students.
- Develop even more opportunities for teachers to share good practice in conferencing and goal setting to ensure that the best practices within the school can be more widely spread.
- Build on existing good practice and assist teachers to produce precise interim and long-term learning goals during start-of-year discussions with senior staff.
- Ensure that all new initiatives have clear timeframes and use interim data to evaluate the school's progress in achieving intended outcomes.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school is rich in data. It makes very good use of the inventory of literacy skills (DIBELS) to identify students who require additional support and to assist staff in setting goals for each grade and individual students. These procedures are embedded in English language arts and math. In these subject areas, teachers have developed a range of techniques for recording student performance during lessons and designing learning goals with students. Targets and conferencing procedures are developing within social studies and science, building on the good practices already established elsewhere. There are clear benefits arising from this intensive data analysis. Over the past two years, standards in English language arts have risen significantly with an even more dramatic rise in standards in math.

Strategically, senior managers are using school-wide data to identify trends and patterns in the performance of many sub-groups. These include higher achieving students, English language learners and special education students with individual education plans. The analysis of data has been the basis for changes in schedule and, in the case of math, a change of program. At present, however, the school does not analyze data thoroughly with regard to ethnicity. This means that the school has no means of knowing the extent to which curriculum initiatives and new ways of working are having an impact across the full school population.

To assist staff in developing assessment and target-setting techniques, the school is focusing on the assessment of written pieces of work. This has been very useful with regard to higher achieving students, where comparing work between classes has enabled teachers to discuss ways in which they can present appropriate challenges. The many structures for collaborative discussion within the school have helped not only in the sharing of data, but also in improving the quality of teaching.

Conferencing between students and teachers now permeates all classrooms, and students are clear about what they need to do to improve their work and make good progress in reaching their goals. In a similar way, parent-teacher conferences allow the discussion of completed work and the next steps for individual students. Parents appreciate the comprehensiveness of this process and the workshops that assist them in supporting their children's needs and goals at home.

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.

All staff communicate high expectations to students and their families. This is done by consistent implementation of the behavior policy, by ensuring that all students are appropriately challenged and by having targets and rubrics displayed prominently on bulletin boards and around the classroom. In practical terms, these high expectations constitute the focus for all activities from start-of-year discussions with staff, through classroom observations to whole staff professional development sessions on differentiated learning. Although the discussions early in the academic year focus well on how teachers will move students forward, there is not enough emphasis on teachers themselves quantifying class goals. Administration and coaches set clear measurable goals for an increase in performance, but teachers vary in their ability to quantify how much progress they expect for individual students by the end of the academic year.

Staff work together well and plan collaboratively. The regular use of e-mail and the small size of the school both assist in the very effective communication that underpins all discussions and decisions. Additional common planning time has assisted in the development of regular grade meetings to discuss data and develop appropriate classroom responses. Good practices often transfer easily from one grade to another. Improvements in grade meeting processes, in turn, transfer well to classrooms. Here teachers are assessing students with greater rigor, reviewing the data and identifying clear goals for individual students. Although collaboration is characteristic of the school's culture, it does not suffuse every aspect of teaching and learning to enable best practices within the school to be shared by everyone.

Meetings have clear agendas, purposeful leadership and a sharp focus on learning outcomes. These rigorous structures have been modeled well by the principal in the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan. All professional groups within the school are canvassed for recommendations and requirements for the coming year, based on the analysis of trends in performance and the identification of priorities for improvement. The impact of this rigor is apparent in the improvements made by individual students.

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 small size of the school contributes to very high levels of trust and respect. This is apparent between teachers and parents, where parents express gratitude for the personal commitment shown by staff. Teachers provide a very good role model for students, who demonstrate a maturity in working together and in talking to adults and each other. The respect of all for the principal is clear. She has been instrumental in assisting the implementation of new approaches. Her knowledge of individual students and her willingness to model new ways of working have meant that staff are well supported in developing their practice. The willingness of senior staff to provide suitable classroom resources has also demonstrated a respect for the staff. The emphasis on personal and academic growth in students is mirrored in the careful attention to the care and development of each member of staff.

Excellent personal relationships have particularly assisted the development of more refined forms of differentiation within the classroom. Coaches, lead teachers and administrators have credibility within the classroom, so advice is followed carefully. As

the result of good teamwork, teachers now use assessment data well for planning flexible classroom groupings.

Teachers have also developed skills in linking the selection of materials to student goals within the classroom to support activities for different groups and individuals. Thus, a good grade 3 lesson sees the teacher making very effective use of manipulatives, grading questions and utilizing the services of the math coach to challenge each student appropriately. While good practice is prevalent within the school, there are still a number of classrooms where questioning is not used effectively to challenge each student at an appropriate level.

All of this takes place within the context of a broad and relevant curriculum, well aligned in State standards. The school has made good use of data analysis to ensure that support is implemented for underachieving students through programs such as Foundations and Wilson. Similarly, the Horace Mann “Summer on the Hill” program has provided opportunities for higher achieving students to become closely involved with private schools and receive the highest level of challenge and expectation. The Arts curriculum provides performance and graphic arts experience in every grade. It is supplemented by rich and effective after-school programs. Puppetry, trips to museums, yoga and dance are a few of the enrichment activities that students enjoy.

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 school is particularly good at aligning its resources to its strategic goals. A major component is the strong professional development program, elements of which were observed during the Quality Review. Teachers receive high quality training from external consultants, experienced in-house lead teachers and, as a whole faculty, from the principal. Although there is a very good focus on the individual needs of each member of staff, there is also careful attention to the priorities identified in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Thus, the emphasis within the past year and projected for the coming year is very much upon the fine tuning of skills that contribute to the effective setting of goals with individual students. Successful school-wide professional development includes high quality work on providing challenges for all students, including the highest achievers, developing conferencing and conference note-taking skills and the explicit teaching of sub-skills.

Further professional development arises from the very good work carried out by the inquiry team. Having researched the use of grammar in written and spoken work for English language learners, the team has involved more teachers and is now piloting techniques that can assist in the teaching of language structures that the school has identified as fundamental to language usage and concept development.

There is a rich and supportive classroom observation program. This, together with a high quality mentoring system for new teachers, means that every member of staff has a significant amount of time working one-on-one with experienced staff, relating classroom practice to the needs of the school and to individual students. Feedback is sensitive and pitched appropriately for all staff. The outcome is the careful and relevant linking of teachers to professional development opportunities and classroom inter-visitations.

The school has established some strong links with services that support students well. These include “Advocates for Children” and the Horace Mann School. In addition, the school-based support teams, with high quality services, especially in the field of social work. The current vacancy for a parent coordinator means that the links with community-based organizations are not as strong as they might be.

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 administrative team has developed a strong system for identifying strengths within the school and building on these. It uses data well to monitor key areas for development in curriculum and classroom management. The principal and her assistant model excellent collaborative working and planning skills, using interim checkpoints to assess the impact that new initiatives, such as reading support programs, are having on student attainment. Their partnership is characterized by open and honest discussion and its qualities have influenced the way that all other leaders and groups work within the school. In this way, grade teams replicate in their curriculum planning, the interim goal setting in the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The administration’s intensive use of achievement, behavior and attendance data has also become the model upon which many teachers set student goals. However, not all plans are equally rigorous because they lack clear timeframes and review points.

There is a strong vision within Little Sparrow that has been adopted by all members of staff. It is rooted in the wish for everyone, students and staff, to reach their full potential. The means by which this overall aim is achieved has milestones along the way, which are regularly assessed in the light of quantitative and qualitative data. The school’s self-evaluation indicates that the assessment of what these goals should be and how far the school has gone along its journey in achieving them are both accurate. Scrutiny of the procedures and classroom techniques adopted by the school shows that the excellent professional development program has led to the development a common language among staff. Observation of classrooms shows that the same rigor is generally applied to student goals as is seen in developing and monitoring the school’s strategic vision. Some staff continue to need support in developing rigorous ways of using attendance and achievement data to assess performance. However, interim data analysis by the cabinet shows that the strong systems now in place are assisting many students in making good progress.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Sidney Silverstein Little Sparrow School	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>				
	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?		X		
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>				
	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

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

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?				X
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

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