



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Museum School

Early Childhood School 333

**888 Reverend James A Polite Avenue
Bronx
NY 10459**

Principal: Sylvia Sanchez

Dates of review: October 14 - 15, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Frank Knowles

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Museum School is an early childhood school with 439 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 3. The school population comprises 20% Black, 78% Hispanic, 0.5% White, 0.5% Native American and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 31% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 90.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 90% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Students engage with their learning in vibrant and lively classrooms, all of which have a strong focus on the display of students' work. Rubrics for classroom routines, some constructed with students, ensure students are fully on task. Students use others prominently on display to help them reach their learning goals. They learn in a climate of calm, respect for all and purposeful endeavor. Teachers communicate well with parents, who value the easy access they have to informal conferences with teachers and the school's supportive and welcoming approach.

The faculty uses data well to plan instruction and to identify areas where the whole class, or part of it, needs additional input or support on a particular topic. However, despite some very good practices, teachers' planning does not always focus enough on the use of differentiated activities to make sure all students are challenged to achieve highly. This is linked to the way goals are set and reviewed across the school. All students know their goals for reading, and some students have individual goals they have agreed with their teacher, for example for writing. Others work mainly from class goals which do not take sufficient account of their individual needs in some subjects.

Teachers work well collaboratively in planning, in sharing good practices throughout the school and in supporting new or inexperienced colleagues to build up a greater range of skills. In addition, the school has very good program of professional development that balances well the needs of the school to move forward as a whole with the individual needs of staff. The work of the inquiry team has had a strong impact, both on professional development and in integrating elements of its support strategy for writing into the mainstream curriculum. All this is helped by a strong culture of reflection among staff, led by the school's administration and involving helpful feedback from their observations of instruction. Although self-evaluation does not have a strong enough focus on students' learning outcomes, it shows a clear understanding of the school's vision and supports school improvement. The school is not, however, systematic in the way it uses the results of its analysis of outcome data for groups of students to identify strengths and areas for improvement. School-wide plans also do not have the timeframes that are needed to support systematic review so that modifications can be made at an early enough stage.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has a very thorough approach to professional development, using a balance of school-determined themes and individual teachers' analysis of their needs.
- Teachers make good use of data in understanding the achievement and progress of the students in their class and in communicating these to parents and caregivers.
- The school has a professional and supportive climate, in which teachers work very well collaboratively, sharing best practices and supporting each other in their personal growth.
- The outcomes of the school's well established inquiry team have been successfully integrated into the school's curriculum.
- The school's monitoring of instruction is accurate and leads to clear, constructive feedback to improve instruction.
- The principal and administration have established a strong climate of mutual trust in the school and have communicated their high expectations of student achievement to students, staff and parents very successfully.

What the school needs to improve

- Make better use of the school's assessment data as a management tool to celebrate best practices and identify areas in all core subjects where improvement is needed.
- Involve students more extensively in setting and reviewing specific individualized goals and in regularly reviewing progress towards them.
- Sharpen lesson planning to encourage consistency throughout the school and incorporate differentiated learning experiences so that the needs of all students are met and they are suitably challenged.
- Focus the school's self-evaluation on learning outcomes and construct school-wide plans for improvement that contain timeframes for periodic review.

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.

Teachers are consistent in their effective use of assessment data to shape their instruction. In the lower grades, they supplement reading levels by school-based data across several subjects and are now recording and using assessments in many core subjects. In the upper grades, they also use the results of external tests in their analysis. They identify areas of work that need further instruction and, in many cases, which students should receive it, either in class or through additional support classes. Teachers use this data to track students' progress well and to inform parents and caregivers regularly about their child's achievements and the next steps in learning. Grade teams analyze the data, too, to influence the approach the grade will take in specific areas of the curriculum. As a result, the school's instruction is securely based in the analysis of individual students' achievement data. Subjects such as science and social studies have recently been included in this collection of assessment data, with others such as art and physical education planned to join in soon.

The school is less successful in its analysis of assessment data to gain a picture of the performance of the school or of sub-groups of its students. Systems to analyze the existing data by grade, class, gender or ethnic group are not consistently used to identify areas where best practices can be shared or where improvement is needed. Some analysis of this kind takes place and teachers keep a watchful eye on trends among groups. But the school does not yet use its data as a management tool to indicate areas where further exploration is needed to understand the situation and bring about improvement where needed.

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.

Grade teams work collaboratively to set goals for the grade and determine goals for students in their classes. They do this using data from internal and external assessments. Teachers review individual students' goals regularly, usually at the end of each unit of work, and this helps them to check on students' progress and modify their goals if needed. Students are not as fully involved in setting up the goals as they could be, although some have highly individual goals that are written following teacher conferences. Many of their goals are not specific enough and this means they are not always sure what actions they need to take to reach them.

Students say that “they learn a lot in this school” and some older students can articulate their goals clearly. Teachers communicate high expectations to students, through conferencing and class discussions, and to parents through agendas and the two-way conversations that teachers have with parents. Some parents have almost daily informal conferences with their child’s teacher, and many others at least weekly. These help parents to reinforce the message about high achievement with their children and support their learning. This is supported by good systems to ensure students follow classroom routines that ensure they are on task and behaving well. Parents confirm the school’s strong work ethic.

A team of staff works collaboratively to produce the Comprehensive Educational Plan and its accompanying action plans. They use data effectively to decide on priority areas for improvement and on how they will implement them. However, they do not include the timeframes needed to support interim evaluations of the plan’s success.

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’s curriculum is broad and covers nearly all core subjects well, although physical education is limited and does not have specialist teaching in the way that it is planned for science, social studies, music and art. Collaborative planning helps to align the curriculum to State standards, and the school’s “museum” theme leads to a strong focus on presenting students’ work in many different contexts, most notably on the school’s annual “museum night”. The variety of topics covered in the year means that students are fully engaged with their work and are very eager to learn in the many areas that interest them. The school is also well resourced, especially in the arts, and senior leaders make sure that all teachers have fully equipped rooms in which to work. In turn, teachers turn their classrooms into vibrant learning spaces that celebrate students’ work in displays.

Within the school, there is a very strong climate of trust among staff, and between staff and students. Students are polite and respond well the high level of respect given to them by staff. Teachers plan collaboratively in grade teams and this means that good ideas are shared among members of the team and there is a consistent approach to instruction in the grade. Teachers’ planning varies in the amount of detail included about the sort of activities that will be used to put over the content, and about the way students’ different needs are met within individual lessons. Some very good differentiated activities take place, for example when a teacher brought a group of higher achieving students together to learn how to respond to other students’ writing as critics. Differentiated learning is not yet consistent throughout the school, however.

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 work together in a highly collaborative way to support each other's professional development. This happens through grade and team meetings, intervisitations and more informal discussions. The use of mentors to support the work of new teachers and teachers new to the school is a strength and experienced staff value the professional association they have with their "critical friend". The school's program of professional development is extensive. It provides a balance of school-determined activities and those identified by an individual, school-wide professional development self-assessment tool, with the balance changing as the year moves on. The school's principal and assistant principal focus strongly on modeling activities that teachers can then take further in their own planning and instruction. This program is supported by regular and frequent informal observations that supplement the mandated formal observations. Feedback is timely, accurate and constructive.

The work of the inquiry team has been exemplary, both in the way that it has taken a strong "action research" approach to its work and in the way that the team's interventions have had a marked effect on the targeted students, who made an average of one and a half year's growth in a year. Not only that, but the main messages from the team's work in developing a rigorous approach to writing have been built into the writing programs of all grades. The school makes very good use of the support services it has on site, with frequent reviews and testing to ensure the right students benefit and to re-integrate students into general education classes when they are ready.

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 school and its staff are continually seeking ways of improving the education they provide for students. Senior staff monitor the work of the school almost continually, providing feedback where this would lead to improvement and focusing on key areas from data analysis and their formal and informal observations. Teachers working in grade teams similarly work together to make decisions about changing the way they teach or what activities or resources to use. Much of this review process stems from the availability of data about students' achievement and progress.

All this takes place within the framework set out by the school's vision to be a living showcase, or museum, of students' published work. This approach to education has been systematically promoted by the principal and it is understood and welcomed by students and parents and aligns well to the school's expectations of high standards. Its emphasis on high-quality content and presentation are modeled effectively for others by the school's senior leaders and, in turn, by teachers so that students and parents are motivated by the consistent celebration of student work.

Faculty members are well represented on the committee that constructs the school's plans for improvement. However, the school's plans do not yet contain the timeframes and interim goals that would support systematic reviews of the outcomes of the school's actions on student achievement. This means that, despite the extent and regularity of reviews that take place informally in teams, the school is not able to take any decisive action that might be needed early in a program of change to ensure it stays on course.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Museum 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, 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>	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