

# **Quality Review Report 2009-2010**

**Public School 771**

**Elementary - High School 771**

**1075 Ocean Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11235**

**Principal: Denise D'Anna**

**Dates of review: March 15 - 17, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Veronica Yurcik**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 771 is an elementary-high school with 381 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 44% Black, 17% Hispanic, 33% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 78% of the students enrolled and girls account for 22%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 88.7%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

As a district 75 special education school, P.S. 771 serves a wide continuum of special needs children with great care across six shared-school sites. The school's hallmark mission is to ensure that students function well within a least restrictive environment. Strong professional collaboration and dedicated effort support this goal which is understood and echoed in the voices of parents and students alike. The new principal makes strategic decisions to build upon this genuine shared belief and the school's record of successful student performance. The addition of several new standards-based elements to curriculum and assessment raises the rigor of practice and deepens the emphasis on focused outcomes. However, while teachers provide very attentive service to their students, their written individualized education plan targets do not always reflect detailed specificity and clearly measurable criteria. Yet, students know their individualized goals and express appreciation for their teachers' support.

The school makes intentional choices in refining and expanding its data collecting practices. Teachers use a wide range of summative and formative information to guide planning and to make informed instructional modifications. The principal's thoughtful development of new structures to monitor supervision, operations and instruction creates aligned resources for timely responsiveness in adjusting procedures to maximize student learning. Staff members analyze student performance results and analyze data but do not always sort information to support the most insightful interpretation. Limited use of technology generates labor-intensive paper systems and inhibits easy aggregation of data and identification of any significant trends in student performance.

Teachers collaborate well within teams to design strategies and lesson plans that improve student academic outcomes. Still, in-depth inquiry work does not occur, since teacher teams place emphasis on creating curriculum based on feedback from the school's one central inquiry team, but not on a range of investigative studies of student work and teacher practice. Assistant principals work to select particular professional teaching standards for concentrated focus, but the writing of measurable goals and timelines for teachers is a work in progress. The school places a high value on professional learning to support students' social and emotional well-being. Staff receive useful training in recognized therapeutic crisis intervention programs. Teachers and guidance personnel communicate often, tracking and targeting students to provide comprehensive support. This enables students to make positive decisions about how they behave, increasing their confidence and independence. Concurrent support for parents through workshops and ongoing staff outreach enable them to work with the school in meeting the particular needs of their children. Staff volunteerism and personal commitment to students make the school a welcoming center of learning and possibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal makes strategic organizational decisions aligning resources to support long-range goals and accountable collaboration to improve student academic outcomes.
  - o New instructional tools, including a language based assessment, curriculum guide and tracking system for autistic or developmentally delayed students, are purposefully introduced. Lesson plans for using assistive technology devices and a highly structured multi-sensory program for teaching speech, reading and writing helps students with severe language and communication delays receive standards aligned instruction and greater access to the general education curriculum. As a result, students experience a focused, rigorous curriculum generating increased academic success. As evidenced in one program where all "SMiLE" participants were speaking and reading words by implementation of the second module.
  - o There has been a tactical hiring of additional assistant principals to supervise instruction and the deliberate expansion of small learning communities. These include teams for each student population that results in purposeful standards aligned instruction to meet the needs of each of the schools' diverse service categories. Teachers work together collaboratively to develop lesson tool kits and strategies resulting in measured improvement in students' phonemic, communication and comprehension skills.
- The school's comprehensive focus on student needs promotes coordinated data driven work and curriculum development that insures each student's social-emotional well-being and academic success.
  - o The school crisis team uses the "School-wide Tracking System" to carry out details of behavior incidents and referrals, effectively identifying key trends to better support classroom teachers and specific students for targeted outreach. Consequently, overall referrals have decreased significantly. Teachers speak highly of guidance counselor support enabling close attention to every student.
  - o Middle school level students participate excitedly in an applied learning interdisciplinary project, *Understanding New Ideas Through Your Voices*. Recently, students created and broadcast a professional news program, complete with commercials, on European exploration of the New World, developing their skills of research, writing, speaking, collaboration, and technology, preparing them for success in meeting high school performance objectives. Students speak about their school eagerly and make personal connections about what they learn in health, science, social studies, computer and physical education classes.
- School leaders and faculty collect a wide range of data that inform needs-identification and adjustments to support learning.
  - o School leaders, teachers and teams meet consistently to share outcomes of periodic assessments, analyze writing on demand pieces, conferencing

notes, intervention log sheets, attendance and behavior data and student portfolios, supplementing summative exam information. They use this data to tailor calculated classroom instructional modifications and strategies based on the identification of specific areas of learning needs and to set school goals.

- Effective emphasis on youth services supports faculty and family development that accelerate the personal and academic growth of students.
  - o Staff members receive in-depth training and certification in *Life Space Crisis Intervention and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention* and implement a *Power of Choice* behavior model with guidance counselor support. Students report that they have learned to make calculated decisions in conflict situations and as a result, classrooms are peaceful and productive learning environments. Students describe their teachers as, “good people,” who talk with them and support them well.
  - o Assistant principals and related service providers conduct monthly parent workshops, which parents praise as helping them to understand their child’s learning goals in the individual education plan, behavior management at school and home, standardized and alternate assessments, community and public agency supports available for special needs students.
- School staff members engage students and their families effectively in on-going discussions regarding student progress and next learning steps to support positive student achievement.
  - o The school maintains repeated personal contact with families through frequent phone calls and by means of communication notebooks or daily reports, which parents state help them to know what activities and specific questions to emphasize to support their child’s learning at home. Students acknowledge and appreciate this support saying that the school “talks respectfully to parents.”
  - o Teachers work with students constantly to provide individualized attention, which enable students to accurately articulate learning goals and strategies they use to meet those goals. Students are grateful for extra help provided and note that, “the school helps you work hard for your goals.”
- Many structures are in place to evaluate organizational and instructional decisions ensuring that practices align to accelerate student learning.
  - o The school uses administrative, pedagogical and curricular checklists systematically to assess decisions. This is assuring alignment of practices to support the schools’ mission of having every student succeed within a least restrictive learning environment. Meeting agendas and minutes are now required, transforming former conversations into more careful study and to provide a record of progress. Crisis, attendance and common planning teams assure interim updates and ongoing focused adjustments to support goals.

## What the school needs to improve

- Increase opportunities for teachers to participate in structured professional inquiry work to effect system changes as an outgrowth of concentrated focus on student learning needs.
  - o Teacher teams work successfully to develop strategies and lessons that improve student outcomes. Post-assessments indicate specific skills evaluation for some students but not all student groups have defined skill areas. Teams track the reading scaled scores of students who qualify for standardized testing but do not gather sufficient evidence to analyze the attainment of or failure to attain specific skills. This makes it more difficult to evaluate causal linkage of instructional practice to student skill gains.
  - o Teams use periodic assessment data to identify student deficits and brainstorm and apply strategies immediately but do not conduct thorough investigation to verify that data. Although the school's main inquiry team developed and uses a classroom visitation tool, teams do not give sufficient time to analyzing conditions of learning that influence student achievement. Team agendas reflect typical common grade and subject planning rather than sustained inquiry on targeted student groups.
- Improve the setting of measurable outcome-based long-term and interim goals to support further differentiation in meeting learning needs.
  - o The school works collaboratively to track progress and adjust instruction to meet learning needs of students. However, although the school works to create SMART goals, its written goals, particularly for students who receive standardized testing, lack specificity and definitive measurable outcomes. Student conferencing notes record observations and suggested next steps but do not clearly reflect focused interim goals.
  - o Teams focus on attaining improved student outcomes and do achieve some success but establishment of target long- and short-term goals for focus student groups is not in place.
- Adjust tools to organize data better so that key trends are more visible and useful in naming strategic adjustments to support student-learning needs.
  - o The school compiles assessment results to inform classroom decisions and monitor progress of targeted students but does not sufficiently sort data to illuminate key trends. For example, the school is now tracking longitudinal data for students but does not make full use of tools such as ARIS to reveal grade, service category or school-wide trends sufficiently.
- Use the school developed Professional Teaching Standards observation tool to set differentiated measurable goals for each teacher.
  - o Assistant principals complete needs assessments with teachers and cooperatively identify particular professional teaching standards for monitoring their performance. Although supervisors have re-written standards to be more reflective of specific teaching behaviors and maintain detailed teacher contact logs, measurable goals and timelines for teacher improvement are not set.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: P.S. K771	Δ	▶	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	▶	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				<b>X</b>
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	▶	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				<b>X</b>
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X				
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		X					
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X				
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>