



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

**Quality Review Report  
Division of Performance and Accountability  
2010-2011**

# **Quality Review Report 2010-2011**

**George Gershwin School**

**Intermediate School 166**

**800 Van Siclen Ave.**

**Brooklyn**

**NY 11207**

**Principal: Maria Ortega**

**Dates of review: March 28 – 29, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Khalek Kirkland, Ed.D**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The George Gershwin School is an intermediate school with 522 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 77% Black, 22% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 88.2%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Students benefit from working in small groups which supports student engagement in the learning process.
  - The school has incorporated the use of small grouping via the workshop model, which is evident across all classrooms. This model allows students to actively contribute to their learning.
  - The school believes that the arts are a key part of teaching students. Programs including band, drama, and a multi-media studio course motivate students. The school also integrates the AVID program into the curriculum to develop college readiness and help students aim honor roll status.
- Relationships between the faculty and students are supportive and inclusive of all learners which allows students to feel safe to reach out to adults for assistance academically and socially.
  - Teachers with classroom management concerns are provided professional development and allowed to attend workshops. In addition, guidance counselors target classrooms where most incidents have occurred during the year. These actions have reduced OORS reporting and, in turn, created a safe environment for students and teachers.
  - The school, in collaboration with community partnerships, conducts weekly seminars on student centered topics such as “Man Up” and “Future Leaders” which are mentoring programs that promote attendance, anti-bullying and anti-gang activities. These workshops ensure that all students are well known by multiple adults in the building and develop positive attitudes toward learning among students and their peers.
- Teachers across the school are engaged in collaborative inquiry and use it to share instructional strategies and raise learning outcomes.
  - A majority of teachers are engaged in a structured professional collaboration where State data is analyzed via Learning Directions Data. This collaboration has brought forth the use of enrichment activities which are now planned during the school day as opposed to after-school. In addition teachers are now helping students brainstorm ideas with the use of graphic organizers, which has improved their writing skill.
- Through regular use of a range of relevant data, the faculty has an understanding of the performance and progress of individuals, which informs instructional adjustments.
  - School leaders disaggregate key information that identifies sub-group progress toward meeting academic proficiency in both ELA and Mathematics. The information is retrieved with the assistance of an outside vendor and reviewed by teachers during common planning time. For example, a review of the English Language Arts data allowed the

school to identify a need for additional after-school programs for English Language Learners. As a result this sub-group has now showed progress on the most recent interim assessment data.

- Individual students benefit from targeted support according to their needs in order to support the ongoing development and implementation of interventions.
  - Teachers utilize the inquiry team model in order to use data from interim assessments and collaborate across content areas in order to set clear goals for students to whom they share. As a result of this work, students were able to use dialogue in a play from English Language Arts class and create a project based exit project for a Social Studies exit project. In addition, reflection sheets are used to help create lesson plans.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Develop rigorous tasks across grades and subjects to ensure that all students make progress in their learning.

Teachers use tiered groupings that are heterogeneous for a majority of core academic subjects. However, there is little evidence of tasks that promote rigorous habits and/or higher order skills slowing academic achievement.

  - Common prep periods allow teachers to share plans and promote some level of consistency across the grade. However, class work does not always reflect planning to engage students that are below grade level limiting their ability to catch up.
- Create a strategic plan to ensure that teachers receive suitable support in order to improve retention of teachers.

Title 1 funding has been used to add additional coaches and to reduce class size. However, there is little evidence to show that staff is receiving professional development to work with students who are at-risk academically. Consequently, the learning needs of the students, particularly of incoming seventh graders, are not adequately addressed.

  - Preference sheets and teacher data reports are reviewed when decisions are made about classroom assignments. However, the school has not been able to support teachers with their instructional goals leading to high rates of teacher attrition.
- Extend data gathering and analysis practices to create common assessments that offer a clear picture of student trends across all aspects of the school.
  - The school uses periodic and summative data, including State exam results and programmatic end of unit exams. However, there is an inconsistent alignment of classroom data to the school's instructional focus areas across all grade levels and subject areas. Support from administrators to teachers as to how to supplement this information in order to identify strengths and areas of need for subgroups of students is sporadic. Consequently, this prevents teachers from better adjusting instruction to assure academic success for all students.

- Implement a yearlong professional development plan that aligns with the whole school and individual goals to insure that rigorous monitoring procedures are introduced that evaluate the impact on student achievement.
  - The administration formally observes teachers to get a snapshot for next steps. However, the observation tool is not specifically connected to school-wide goals, limiting feedback that promotes pedagogical development towards the principal's vision of the school.
  - Professional development is done around the use of data to differentiate instruction. However, the support for this work is not strategically focused on teachers along the continuum of teacher development. For example, new teachers are not provided sufficient support to ensure improvements in teacher practices and content knowledge.
- Refine action planning by developing benchmarks for all plans to enable the administration to modify goals and objectives in a timely manner to optimize student achievement.
  - The school uses data to set long term school-wide goals. However, these goals do not include benchmarks that monitor the progress of student learning. This prevents the administration from identifying the appropriate mid-course corrections that, if addressed, would assure that the school is on a path to meeting its goals. As a result, there is a limited understanding of the modifications needed to be made related to organizational and instructional goals at key points in the year to ensure consistent high levels of student achievement.
  - Teacher teams meet weekly and discuss intervention strategies. This discussion includes a start date, end date and an assessment tool to be utilized. However, teacher teams do not yet have a practice for consistently measuring progress for targeted groups of students. As a result, teams of teachers have limited formative knowledge of how students are progressing toward meeting instructional goals.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

<b>School name: The George Gershwin School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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>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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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>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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>					
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?		<b>X</b>					
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?		<b>X</b>					
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		<b>X</b>					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>