



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report 2010-2011**

**The Samantha Smith School**

**Elementary School 182**

**90-36 150<sup>th</sup> Street  
Jamaica, N.Y. 11435**

**Principal: Andrew Topol**

**Dates of review: April 4 - 5, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Samantha Smith School is an elementary school with 865 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 2. The school population comprises 12% Black, 46% Hispanic, 4% White, and 38% Asian students. The student body includes 47% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 93.7%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
  - The school's schedule, done in multi-week segments, includes key elements aligned with the school's goals. An extended day schedule allows English as second language (ESL) teachers to plan with cooperating teachers every other week, specialty (cluster) teachers provide coverage for classroom teachers to attend planning sessions with ESL teachers, teachers attend committee meetings for professional development, and on designated days specialty teachers meet for inquiry work. Thus, the level of instruction is deepening, and teacher practice and student achievement are positively impacted.
  - As an outgrowth of bi-monthly one-to-one meetings, the principal adjusts out-of-classroom teacher assignments, (bilingual, literacy, and math coaches, and literacy teacher), so that they work in classrooms where there is a need for remediation. Thus, staff is able to create small group instruction while the classroom teacher works with higher achieving children for enrichment. This structure has resulted in addressing and meeting the school's goal to improve outcomes for at-risk students.
- Relationships across the school are warm, supportive, and inclusive of students, teachers, and parents, who feel valued and take pride in being part of the school community.
  - The principal encourages all stakeholders to be active members of the school community and inspires collegial sharing, leading to all constituents feeling comfortable and respected. During the parent meeting, parents commented how "the school communicates with me in a language I can understand about my child's achievements and success, resulting in an environment that supports the needs of the students.
  - Students' enthusiastically state that the principal knows them personally and greets them at the school's entrance in the morning and says "good-bye" at dismissal. This is highly supportive of their social-emotional needs and ultimately impacts on students' overall academic development.
- Administrators and teachers effectively use a wide range of assessment data to monitor school-level needs, student progress, plan instruction, and create successful intervention strategies.
  - Finding that the Teachers' College (TC) narrative curriculum in writing proved to be an insufficient assessment tool for the school, the staff created their own writing rubrics based upon the TC continuum, the Common Core Standards (CCSS), and their own needs analyses. Data from this tool enables them to craft targeted instruction and make decisions geared to improve performance and accelerate student growth.
  - The school's improvement in the depth and accuracy of their reading running-record analysis includes data that enables the school to realize that lower

achieving students have lower phonemic awareness scores. This has resulted in the creation of small group work focused on fortifying phonics skills, allowing targeted instruction to preclude this skill from negatively affecting reading performance.

- The principal has created a learning community that is well focused on student outcomes with a vision to accelerate learning.
  - Analysis of student work, conferences, and observations, highlighted that students struggled with basic number facts. This resulted in a school wide goal, as reflected in the Comprehensive Educational Plan and the Principal Performance Review, for students to gain automaticity of basic number facts, (computational fluency), and the use of a math continuum, scaffolded grade to grade for addition, subtraction and communication. Teacher inquiry teams center their work on math automaticity resulting in the implementation of a focused school wide initiative to improve students' academic achievement in this content area.
  - Students receive goals in literacy, math, and writing, which are then distributed to parents, along with suggestions on how to improve, leading to parents and students articulating and explaining the goals that are maintained until mastery, when new targets are established. Consequently, there is a universal awareness of the specific need and consistent support from all members of the school community.
- The school conveys high expectations to parents and keeps them well informed of school programs, thus impacting positively on student achievement.
  - The school rewrote their report card and expanded the teacher comments to parents to provide specific information in easily understood terms. As a result, there is a consistent message to families on expectations and their role in assisting their children to advance.
  - School leadership team (SLT) parent members along with staff discuss potential goals, leading to finalizing the school's CEP and PPR goals. As a result, there is a shared commitment to the school's high expectations and targeted goals around improving student outcomes.
- The school's effective systems for monitoring teaching practice provide a clear focus that improves instructional practice.
  - Articulation and awareness of student math thinking is a primary focus with an eye towards all first and second grade students gaining automaticity of basic number facts (computational fluency). A school-generated math continuum supports teacher work resulting in success in leveraging positive school wide change.
  - The principal's scheduling of "coach" periods within cluster teachers' programs to cover new teachers allows staff to meet with a coach for one-to-one needs based professional developmental. This practice highlights teacher input and reflects attention to teacher's targeted needs.

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

- Utilize the network of specialized support personnel to ensure meeting the personal, social, physical, and emotional needs of students and families.

- In response to a low rating relative to student social-emotional needs on the 2009-2010 Learning Environment Survey, the assistant principal researched and implemented the Positive Behavioral Intervention Strategies (PBIS) program in order to provide workshops and lessons in behavior management. However, team and curriculum planning is still in the developmental stages, therefore the impact of the program is not yet evident.
- The school's Explorers' afterschool programs, partnered with the Department of Health's "Development Without Walls" program, provides arts-integrated, real-world experiences to children. However, as currently only 200 out of 560 first and second grade students participate, there is a missed opportunity for all students to engage in interactive learning to enrich academic tasks.
- Develop coherence and alignment in the school's curriculum with State standards to ensure that all students make progress in their learning.
  - While teachers collaboratively plan lessons using the New York City scope and sequence in science and social studies, there is no evidence of aligning the lesson vertically using the New York State standards, resulting in inconsistencies across grades and subject areas.
  - The school does not yet provide sufficient opportunities for higher achieving students to engage in enrichment activities well suited to their ability, a sentiment echoed by parents. As a result, the individual learning needs of students are not consistently targeted nor are they suitably challenged.
- Deepen differentiation of instruction so that all lessons engage students and offer suitable challenge at their level, including effective questioning that elicits higher-order thinking and extends learning.
  - Individual teachers and teacher teams plan differentiated lessons using various data. Currently, as observed during class visits, there is a lack depth of instruction, thus hindering appropriate challenges aligned to the students' achievement levels and limiting multiple entry points into the curriculum.
  - Classroom practices do not show students "actively engaging in their own learning with high levels of accountable talk and/or interaction with a partner, a group, or whole class." This limits students' ability to learn from each other and maximize academic growth.
- Refine action planning by creating long-term/multi-year planning and developing interim goals and benchmarks so that progress can be measured, readjustments made, and success evaluated.
  - While the school's current goals are based on November 2008 data, and are written in the CEP, PPR and SSEF, a long-term plan with periodic monitoring is not available. This results in the inability to modify goals in a timely manner in order to optimize the impact of actions.
  - Although the school currently sends progress reports, they only focus on reading, writing, and math, therefore missing opportunities for families to gather a full-range of information relative to all content areas.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: The Samantha Smith School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	
<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>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
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?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
<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>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 <b>Gather</b> and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?				X
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	

**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.**

<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
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

**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.**

<i>To what extent does the school...?</i>	UD	D	P	WD
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		

**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.**

<i>To what extent does the school...?</i>	UD	D	P	WD
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>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>