



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Salk School of Science**

**Middle School 255**

**320 East 20th Street  
New York  
NY 10003**

**Principal: Rhonda Perry**

**Dates of review: February 4 - 5, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Jan Warner**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Salk School of Science is an intermediate school with 385 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 12% Black, 13% Hispanic, 40% White and 31% Asian students. The student body includes 0.2% English language learners and 6.5% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 95%. The school does not receive Title 1 funding.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Students are motivated by the broad and demanding curriculum and enjoy numerous out of school activities.
- The school provides focused intervention and support for special education students which ensures that they make good progress.
- Considerable emphasis is given to improving the quality of teaching and learning through professional development and the regular monitoring of classroom practice.
- The school provides excellent support to new teachers and nurtures all staff to help them succeed in their careers.
- Instructional activity is strongly focused on a collective understanding of students' needs in relation to the curriculum plan.
- Students' personal and academic development is supported by the mutual trust and respect built up across the community.
- The school communicates progress well to parents and keeps them informed.
- High expectations are evident among students, staff and parents.
- The good quality of instruction results in students being motivated and engaged in their lessons.
- The principal is an inspirational leader with a clear vision for driving the school forward.

### What the school needs to improve

- Share school goals fully with the larger parent population.
- Visit other similar schools in order to search out best practices.
- Continue to develop the in-depth study of data to drive instruction.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

### **Overall Evaluation**

#### **This school is well developed.**

The warm and welcoming atmosphere at this school is evident throughout the building. Students are happy to be at Salk School and are eager to learn. Teachers provide relevant learning environments and the students are fully involved in the broad educational opportunities on offer. Teachers use data well to match instruction to students' learning needs. Students know where they are with their learning and parents are also kept fully informed. In this way, high expectations are transmitted at all levels. However, the school has not been so effective in sharing whole school goals with parents in a timely fashion.

Teachers receive excellent support and training to enable them to do their job well and they are held fully accountable for the progress of their students. Monitoring at all levels is rigorous and timely, leading successfully into planning and goal setting. Student progress is constantly under review and the school is always seeking new ways to be even more successful. The work of the inquiry team forms part of this process. This well-established team is studying the dip in progress between the grades 7 and 8 in order to investigate measures to raise achievement. However, the school has not yet established effective links with similar schools to benefit from best practice in maintaining progress at that age.

Since the last Quality Review, the school has standardized the use of data and assessment management systems and, as a result, has improved the monitoring of student performance including that of all the sub-groups. Intervention strategies are well developed and special education students make very good progress. The principal and her team work very closely together to inspire students and fully embed the Salk school values in all the practices in the school. Therefore the whole community is learning together in a positive and satisfying way.

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

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The wealth of data collated by the school provides a thorough understanding of the progress and achievement of every student, class and grade. The results of standardized assessments are used to create a baseline of incoming students in English

language arts and math. Teachers then use interim and predictive test data and strand analysis information to group students and identify and plan for those students allocated the 37 1/2 minutes of extra instruction in order to ensure support is well targeted. Teachers continually monitor student progress by collecting formative assessment data, such as test item analysis, conferencing notes, unit assessments, quizzes and student writing portfolios in order to match instruction to meet identified student need.

The progress of special education students is carefully monitored on a quarterly basis. As a result, these students are moved from self-contained into collaborative team teaching and general education classes in certain subjects according to progress made. This approach allows each student to work to their strengths and make good progress.

All data is disaggregated in terms of ethnicity and gender. Comparisons of progress over time indicate that progress slows between grades 7 and 8. The principal has compared results with similar schools in her peer group to see where progress is maintained over time but has not yet made closer contact with those schools to benefit from the sharing of good practice. The teachers have received effective training in the interpreting the data and in devising appropriate tools in order to use data to inform their practice at all levels. However, they have not been using all of the common assessment tools they have devised and the school knows that it needs to revisit and revise the use of such tools in order to refine their use over time.

**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 well developed. T**

There is a high level of collaboration across the school. Discussions take place between all grades and in every subject area at class grade and student level so that challenging data-led goals can be set that closely meet students’ needs. The pupil personnel team meets regularly to discuss the individual progress of all special education students and plan their programs. This team articulates well with general education teachers in order to continually monitor progress and match the curriculum to their needs. All interventions are based on close analysis of data, and literacy levels are frequently tested to ensure that the support provided is effective. Those students requiring specific support in subject areas are offered extra sessions after school. The school provides enrichment opportunities at this time as well as other intervention strategies to challenge and widen the experience of all students.

The administration studies the Quality Review, the progress report and the school survey on a yearly basis in order to identify goals for the following year. These goals are shared with the whole school community via team meetings, letters to parents and the school website. However, the principal is aware that not all parents receive this information early enough. This undermines her aim that goals should underpin the work of all partners as the year progresses, Parents are quick to point out that in every other way the school keeps them fully informed and that they are treated as real partners in their child’s education. Curriculum maps for each subject are distributed to families at curriculum nights at the beginning of each year as well as being posted on the school website. All rubrics are distributed at the start of any new program and students are given all test papers to take home and get signatures from their parents when they have been shared. Parent teacher conferences are so well attended that an extra night has been added to accommodate numbers. They praised the school for always responding to their emails and telephone calls in a timely way and for being regularly invited to the

school when the children have special projects to present. In this way, student achievements are always celebrated and expectations kept high. All concerned know the standards expected. The school successfully promotes an ethos where students are encouraged to have inquiring minds and become critical thinkers and all those involved have high expectations of themselves and each other.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

Teachers are constantly adapting and revising the curriculum to make sure that it is relevant and well aligned to State tests. When changes in content occur, teachers use their common planning time to ensure that they are all well prepared for teaching new topic areas, drawing on each other’s expertise. The curriculum is supported by associations with universities and colleges which help with the research-based project aspect of the science program. In this way, students are provided with very experienced group tuition on a regular basis. The students are offered a great variety of electives and extra-curricular activities which gives them further opportunities to acquire new skills and widen their range of experiences. Students explained how much they appreciated being given the chance to study such subjects as Spanish and forensics as well as taking part in athletics, drama, robotics and being members of the student council.

Strong levels of communication ensure that all teachers work closely together for the good of the students. The principal is an inspired leader who sets out her vision for developing the whole child in a clear way and fully supports her teachers to do their job successfully. Everyone knows what is expected of them and what they can achieve high standards in a fully supportive environment. Teachers use all the formative assessments they gather in an effective way to inform instruction. Group work underpins differentiated instruction and the students work together in a cooperative way to learn successfully. Special education students are well served in small self-contained classes and the principal has hired more special education teachers in order to ensure that collaborative team teaching occurs in more subject areas. This enables more individual attention to be given to those students who most need it. The principal has also purchased more technology to enhance the teaching strategies available.

Teaching is made interesting, challenging and relevant. One student said that she was “really excited to go to class” in relation to discussions around the election in social studies where students were being encouraged to read the newspapers and air their views. Students also expressed the view that they are treated more like adults than “little children”. This trust and respect promotes excellent relationships between students as well as with teachers. School values are reinforced as part of the strong advisory curriculum which further supports the strong sense of community in the school.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The professional development team in the school works well together to ensure that the training provided fully meets teachers’ needs. The team regularly surveys teachers to

ensure that professional development is differentiated according to need. Both formal and informal observations are based on the “Salk School Expectations and Routines” in order to ensure consistency of practice. The administration use weekly walkthroughs as opportunities to give regular feedback to staff and as ways of sharing good practice. Teachers are encouraged to observe one another in a supportive way. Coaches also work with teachers to model good practice and ensure inter-visitations are planned in a structured way so that they are beneficial to all concerned. This is particularly true of the support offered to new teachers who are also given experienced mentors. The mentors work together to plan suitable training and a program of class visits to cover all aspects of relevance to good classroom practice.

All the teams in the school work very effectively and communication between teams is good. In this way, teachers are given a say in the decision-making processes in the school and are gaining valuable experience as leaders. As a result, several are now training as administrators. The students feel safe and comfortable in the calm, caring atmosphere developed throughout the school. The school counselor works in a proactive way to ensure that students receive strategies to deal with such topics as bullying and peer pressure. These are reinforced during advisory sessions. The counselor also runs workshops for parents and is instrumental in helping all students make successful transitions to high school. The school has also developed a good range of useful links with outside agencies. Associations such as those with New York University, the Urban Advantage scheme, the Tisch School of Art and the Organization of American Historians broaden and enrich students’ overall development.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for 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 well developed.**

Planning, goal setting and on-going monitoring procedures are closely linked and enable the school to measure its success and adjust programs as and when required. For example, the case study approach is used to ensure that discussions are related to individual students and their progress in order that lessons are learnt for the benefit of others. The use of strand analysis has also been further developed in order to facilitate the sharing of patterns and concrete examples of strategies used to inform future practices.

The teaching of literacy has been infused throughout all subject areas and books and reviews displayed throughout the school in order to extend reading levels and broaden the range of literacy skills. This has also been a focus of the introduction of the Writers’ College with all the professional development opportunities it affords. The school, having identified that there is a dip in math results around algebra in grade 8, has planned for the scheduling of extra test preparation and the expansion of student participation in math competitions. The school vision for educating the whole child, expanding their possibilities and helping them to believe in themselves underpins all the instruction provided and is ensuring that students are well prepared for high school and their future educational careers.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Salk School of Science</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				X	

### Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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 students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?				X	
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				X	

### Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				X	

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>