



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Public School 053
720 Livonia Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Gloria Sorkin

Dates of review: January 22 - 23, 2007

Reviewer: Helen Donnellan

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 53 is a multi-sited school for special education serving students from the borough of Brooklyn. The seven sites serve 393 students from kindergarten through grade 12. Fifty-one percent of students are Black, 34% Hispanic, 10% White and 4% Asian. Thirty-four students are English language learners. Seventy percent of the students are male and 30% are female.

Twenty-four percent of students are assessed using standardized tests and the remaining 76% of students are assessed using the New York State alternate assessment.

Instruction is provided in self-contained classes, community based learning and inclusion classes. Fifty students participate in community-based vocational and work study programs, using 13 sites across Brooklyn. Fifty-eight students are located in full-time inclusion classes in general education schools. Other students are included in academic programs within the general admission host schools. Class sizes reflect the needs of the students, with staffing ratios of 6:1:1; 8:1:1; 12:1:1 and 12:1:4 (student-teacher-paraprofessional).

The student population includes a diverse range of disabilities: multiple disabilities, emotional and behavior difficulties, autism and learning disabilities. All students have an individual education plan.

Each off-site school is managed by an assistant principal, with an overall principal located at the main site, Public School 53.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides strong leadership and works with the assistant principals at all sites to ensure that the school is effectively managed.
- High expectations for instruction, students' positive learning outcomes and behavior are evident in all aspects of school life.
- Formal and informal data is analyzed to give information on student progress, relating to their individual education plan goals.
- Data is well used to differentiate instruction.
- Teachers are skilled in planning instruction that matches the needs of students and delivering lessons in line with their planning.
- Students are active and engaged in lessons in restrictive and inclusive settings.
- The curriculum reflects the students' interests and skills, within the mandated requirements.
- Agencies work closely together to provide a unified, integrated service to support the students and their families.
- The staff work hard to engage parents and work with them in supporting their children's education.
- Students are treated with dignity and respect.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to extend the use of technology for instruction and to support students in their learning.
- Widening collaboration in planning instruction, to include teachers and related service providers.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

PS 53 is a school where high expectations are made clear to students and staff by the principal and her administration team. The principal leads with a warm, professional style and prides herself on knowing her staff and students, at all sites, well. She reflects and reviews all actions the school takes, considering how outcomes could be improved.

Staff are committed to enabling students to develop and do not perceive disabilities as barriers to learning, but things to be worked around. Instruction is meaningful which is recognized by parents who said, "It's not play school – there is a focus on learning and preparing for life after school," and "staff all aimed like arrows pointing at and achieving the goals for students and the school." Teachers collaborate and work closely with para-professionals to help the students in their learning. Inclusive programs are characterized by working partnerships between general and special education staff.

This school carefully records the progress of each student to give a full picture of their development and performance. This may include academic, social, communication, motor and physical development. All data is analyzed and teachers use this as the basis for their instruction plans, so that teaching is based on the students needs. Alternate assessment results for 2006 results show that students achieve well in English language arts, mathematics and social studies. Data is used to review interventions and plans, and decisions to make changes are based upon sound evidence.

A range of technology, from computers to control switches are used to enable students to access the curriculum and work towards their goals. Electronic work boards are beginning to be used by some teachers to support their teaching and there is potential for this to be extended.

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 student progress over time.

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

Data underpins how the school works and extensive data is collected about student performance from standardized and alternate assessments. These formal assessments are complimented by informal records, including teacher observations, which are recorded in detail to give clear and up-to-date pictures of what each student can do and their rate of progress. Individual student portfolios include State tests and New York State alternate assessment, the Brigance inventory of skills and observational records of development. Teachers have broken the New York State alternate assessment levels into very small steps, alternate grade indicators, to record small progress made by students with multiple disabilities. New York State English as a second language achievement test assessment records show progress made by English language learners. The treatment and education of autistic children and related communication handicapped children program (TEACCH) is

used to assess students with autism, as assessment activities are selected to match each student's needs.

Detailed analyses of progress made by each student and groups are made to show patterns and trends and how much progress has been made over a period of time. The principal compares progress made by students at the different sites as part of her monitoring of the effectiveness of the school.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

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

Each student's goals are set out within the individual education plan, which is reviewed three times annually. A diverse range of assessment information is used to identify small goals for each student. At academic intervention meetings, teachers and para-professionals review progress, set goals and make plans to support the students in achieving those goals. Where little or no progress is evident, possible reasons are explored and intervention is changed.

Individual and small group instruction gives students opportunities to learn at their own pace and apply strategies for learning to reinforce their knowledge and skills. Teachers and para-professionals are skilled at matching activities and learning content to the needs of students, taking account of their auditory, visual, aesthetic and cognitive needs and preferences.

Where students do not achieve their individual education plan, the principal explores this further with the staff involved and takes this into account in her lesson observations. She conveys an expectation that instruction and intervention will enable every student to make progress. Students evaluate their own work using a rubric they can understand, so that they give feedback on their learning.

Parents are asked to attend individual education plan meetings and contribute to individual education plan goals, so that instruction is relevant to the holistic needs of the student. Great efforts are made to obtain parents' views, through the parent co-ordinator and outreach staff who visit students' homes. Report cards with a copy of the individual education plan goals, are sent to parents three times annually, so that parents can see the link between goals and progress. "Backpack express" is how much information is sent home to parents, so they are informed of out of school opportunities for learning and how to support their children.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

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

The curriculum reflects the mandated content of the curriculum and the goals set out in each student's individual education plan. Teachers ensure that curriculum content is adapted to reflect the age and cognitive level of each student. The curriculum is enhanced

by programs to achieve non-academic goals which might relate to motor development, behavior or social skills. At PS384, one of the co-located schools, general and special education teachers and students work alongside each other in the "Teaching Little Hearts to be Big" program, to build social skills and self-esteem. In this the special education teacher leads the combined classes, working closely with general education staff to develop each student. The ratio of computers to students is 1:2, and computers and electronic aids to learning are widely used by teachers and students in all classes. Smartboards are available for use but are not yet used routinely by teachers.

At the main site, limited facilities for physical education are overcome by daily yoga classes, use of facilities at the Brooklyn recreational center and therapy programs. An adaptive physical education program provides exercise and motor development for students with physical difficulties.

Data is well used to differentiate instruction to match students' academic, behavioral, physical and social needs and determine how to assess their progress. Written and spoken language, symbols and photographs are used extensively to reinforce meaning, in ways that different students understand. Following assessments, teachers collaborate to mark and agree levels for work, so that scores are applied consistently by all staff. The administrators hold teachers accountable by evaluating instruction against planning, as part of their lesson observations.

The principal allocates the budget with students needs as the prime influence, making sure that the optimal resources are available to support them.

Support staff have to account for their contribution to instruction through the completion of logs, which are monitored to ensure that support is congruent with the students' goals.

Those students who receive their education at co-located sites have equal access to general education facilities. Scheduling also maximizes the opportunities for combined teaching and inclusion into general education classes.

Special education teachers are skilled at providing resources to support students' learning and assessment needs. Great care is taken to ensure that resources match the chronological age and interests of the students. This means that staff often make materials for an individual student or group of students. Where teaching is strong students are attentive and engaged in classes. Para-professionals use their deep knowledge of individual students well to keep them focused and engaged in special and general education classes. Teachers provide the students with lesson content that engages them and deliver their lesson in meaningful ways. Students are able to influence topics that are taught within subjects, which help them to remain motivated.

Students are treated with dignity and respect by staff, who show care and concern for them as individuals. Students needing assistance with personal care or medical issues use private, screened areas and enclosed washroom, showing respect for their personal needs and privacy. Staff recognize non-verbal communication signals and students use a range of assistive devices to express their needs and preferences.

Attendance is a priority for the school and guidance and teaching staff work together to explore the reasons behind low attendance when this occurs. Strategies are agreed that involve school staff and other agencies.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

The principal seeks high performing staff and evaluates prospective teachers in a number of ways before hiring them; these include interviews and demonstration lessons. The expectation for staff to use data is explicit and all teachers have access to student performance data on-line, giving constant access to current information. New and established staff receive training in how to link assessment data to individual education plan goals and lesson content, to support them in using data.

Professional development days are complemented by sharing of professional knowledge through inter-visitations and peer observations. Staff from all sites collaborate for professional development and include their general education colleagues, which reflects the depth of commitment to inclusive education – for both students and professionals.

While lesson observations are carried out by the assistant principals, the principal oversees the process in two ways, to provide consistency and objectivity. Firstly, she arranges for assistant principals to observe teachers at sites they do not manage directly and, secondly she moderates all written feedback following observations. Where concerns are raised, the principal observes that teacher, before comparing her findings with those of the assistant principal before agreeing on the support needed.

Collaborative working is a feature of the school, from the use of academic intervention planning through to 'Meet and Eat' lunches when teachers and coaches meet to share good practice and review new assessment data.

The principal and assistant principals are well respected by staff, students and parents. The principal knows her staff, provides support and shows staff that their contributions are valued. She is realistic about actions and changes she can make and where she cannot. There is clear leadership of the multi-sited school, which is described as a "well run ship."

Working with other agencies is seen as an essential feature in the delivery of school-wide services to support students in working towards their individual education plan goals. The support staff consistently provides professional development to staff and is always available to assist them with strategies that will increase student outcomes but currently there are limited opportunities for support service staff to contribute to multi-professional team meetings. This limits the school-wide approach to planning and evaluation.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

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

Reviewing the effectiveness of school plans, including the Comprehensive Education Plan, forms part of the principal's performance review process. Data on student performance and outcomes of lesson observations are considered alongside the goals at a whole school and class level. This information is probed and reflective questions are asked to explore the reasons behind it and ways to move forward.

The diversity of the student population means that it is not always possible to make 'like with like' comparisons between student groups. Comparisons are made when they are valid. The principal does compare progress made over time and when slowing down of progress is indicated, this triggers review and changes of plans.

No time is wasted in drawing out information from assessments, even before authorized test scores are known. After students have completed their State assessment tests, their papers are scanned by a staff member who is an experienced marker, so that curriculum areas which appear to be weak can be addressed without delay. When the official results are available, the school analyzes this, to confirm areas of strength and weakness. This information is then used to modify future plans and goals.

The administration reviews data at whole school level, while teachers review it at class and student level. For example, at each site staff review the alternate assessment results as soon as they are available, alongside observations and other assessment results, to identify the next steps needed to move each student forward. The use of data is part of an ongoing cycle of planning, delivery, monitoring and review of instruction at all sites.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 053	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X