



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Mill Basin School
Public School 236**

**6302 Avenue U
Brooklyn
NY 11234**

Principal: Mary Barton

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Reviewer: Alan Boyle

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Background 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 236, Mill Basin School, is an elementary school with 614 students enrolled in grades pre-kindergarten through 5. The school serves a largely White neighborhood: 63% of students are White, 23% Black, 8% Hispanic and 6% Asian. At the time of this review, there were 13.8% of special education students and 16% of students were English language learners. The proportions of these categories of students have been increasing in recent years. During last school year, 27% of students were eligible for Title 1 funding, well below the City average of 72%. Student attendance at 93.8% is higher than the City average of 92.8%.

Another school, PS 771, is housed in the same building. This is a school for special education students. Several students are mainstreamed full-time using the inclusion model into classrooms in PS 236. Children from both schools share facilities such as the auditorium, lunchroom and gym. The two schools share a school-based support team.

There are two full-day pre-kindergarten classes and one of these is an Eagle class that selects children by ability. From grades 2 through 5, the school has a Scholars Academy for more academically advanced students. This program is at a higher level than the Eagle classes that also run through these grades. There are two Eagle classes in both kindergarten and grade 1.

Last year over 60% of grade 5 students qualified to take entrance examinations for the district's Center for Intellectually Gifted (CIG) program and three quarters of them earned acceptance.

The school has a long tradition of high performance in State and City tests. The principal, in her eight years as school leader, has maintained this tradition while adjusting the school to its changing pattern of student intake. There is a significant increase in the number of English language learners this year.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Mill Basin School consistently achieves high academic standards compared with similar schools and the City overall.
- Parental partnerships make a significant and direct contribution to students' progress across the school.
- All students are fully stretched and make excellent progress in their learning.
- Teachers, students and their parents all share high expectations of academic achievement; students really fulfill the school's ambition to 'Reach for the stars'.
- The quality of teaching is excellent.
- Detailed and careful data analysis of students' academic achievement informs lesson planning.
- Personalized intervention programs accelerate learning and close achievement gaps.
- Students develop very positive attitudes to their learning.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, enriched by arts programs.
- The principal displays strong leadership and she develops leadership capacity across the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Seek and explore best instructional practices to support English language learners.
- Further develop students' writing, to maintain the school's leading edge.
- Share best practices among teachers within the school.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

PS 236 is successful with its diverse intake of students. All students, from high achievers to students who learn more slowly, make excellent progress in the school. The school encourages its students to 'Reach for the Stars' and they do just that. Under-achievement is an unknown concept. Teaching is excellent throughout the school. Effective partnerships with parents help the school to get the best from each student. Reliable data is used to drive instruction and organize resources so that every student succeeds. Early intervention programs help students who fall behind to quickly catch up and avoid being left so far behind that they lose hope. Professional development is the key to the high quality of teaching. Its consistency is developed through collaboration and extended leadership.

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.

The school has a well-established and rigorous approach to data collection. A wide range of different assessments are gathered for each individual student. Teachers are continuously updating these records and analyzing them to keep track of the progress made compared with other students at the same grade level. The principal and her assistant principal share copies of these files so that they have up-to-date information about the progress of each individual student in the school. It is the focus on each individual student that makes this so well-developed.

The high standards that the school has achieved in City and State tests in the past means that the teachers in all grades have a deep understanding of the work expected from students in all areas of the curriculum. They are able to use past performance as a reliable yardstick to monitor the progress of individual students. It is the depth of this understanding, developed over time, which has a significant impact on students' progress. Teachers are also aware of standards achieved by different groupings within the school and of comparisons with similar schools. The school is well-placed to make effective use of the enhanced data that the Department of Education plans to provide 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.

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

High expectations are clearly evident throughout the school. The long-term target, shared by school leaders and teachers, is to move all students to the highest possible levels. Teachers are at ease with this demand because they are confident in their abilities, based on proven success. They understand what each individual student must do next to make progress. Parents are fully involved in the process. Teachers are always available to meet parents and discuss their children's progress. Homework is regularly set and parents work in harmony with the school.

The quality of teaching in PS 236 is excellent so these high expectations are actually achieved. Teachers collaborate effectively in grade teams to plan their lessons. With the range of reliable data that the school collects, teachers are able to personalize the learning for each student. Teachers use a variety of strategies: individual work, small group work and whole class teaching as appropriate. They mix and match activities to engage all students with their learning. Teachers are designing rubrics that will enable students to assess their own work.

Particular attention is paid in the early grades to students who need additional help. Any achievement gaps between students are tackled promptly before they develop and become so big that they cannot be bridged. Students are never allowed to struggle on their own without any hope of catching up with their peers.

Quality Statement 3 – Build and Align Capacity: 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.

Curriculum planning is particularly impressive. It is carefully structured to provide frequent, meaningful, data about student progress. This not only helps teachers to differentiate their lessons according to students' prior attainment, it also enables the school to match its resources to student outcomes.

The school budget is tight so it is essential that all decisions are based on reliable data, and they are. The scheduling of academic intervention services is the critical feature that ensures success across the school. Most intervention is in grades 2 and 3 so that students' learning is accelerated. By grade 4, it is rare to find any students at level 1, including special education students. The school's data also show significant shifts of students from level 3 to level 4.

The curriculum is enriched by arts programs and music. There is an outdoor classroom, developed with support from parents and the community. The parents' association provides books, computers, learning materials and money for field trips. Students are fully engaged as active participants in this rich and varied selection of learning opportunities. They are well-behaved and enthusiastic learners, eager to attend school.

The parent coordinator runs workshops for parents to synchronize support at home with lessons in school. Parents volunteer as Learning Leaders and assist students with their reading in grades 1 and 2.

It is the quality and reliability of the school's data that enable it to identify areas for improvement. Whilst students' writing is not a weakness in any sense, the school reckons it could do more with the curriculum to make it even better.

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 school's capacity to improve student learning is very high. There is a well-qualified and committed staff, all teachers have masters' degrees and many are continuing their learning with post-graduate work. They are skilled professionals, accustomed to using data to drive instruction.

Professional development has been a key ingredient to the success of the school. It is job-embedded so that teachers learn their craft in their own classrooms with a real context. Decisions about professional development are informed by students' progress and lesson observations. For example, the analysis of test data revealed an issue about spelling that prompted further investigation.

The principal and the assistant principal use lesson observations to form the big picture of what is going on in the school. These data are used to inform future professional development and also to evaluate it. There are fewer opportunities for professional learning now and the principal relies on more creative ways to develop the school's capacity. One of these is through peer observations but at present the school does not allow enough opportunities for this to fully extend the best practices that exist throughout the building.

The staff work collaboratively in grade teams and other teams focused on student achievement. The Academic Intervention Services team includes the parent coordinator who manages the volunteer parents who work in the school. Observations from social settings, such as the lunchroom, as well as assessment data, are used to inform these teams and align resources with students' needs.

The principal is respected by staff, students and parents for her ability to maintain the school's high standards. She develops leadership across the school and this enables her to provide effective responses to the changing nature of the student intake. In this current school year, the number of English language learners has doubled. The school is aware of the need to explore the best instructional strategies for these students to ensure they meet the school's high expectations. The principal is concerned that these students also receive the additional support to which they are entitled.

The school runs smoothly; it is clean, bright and welcoming. It provides a safe and secure learning environment.

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.

The rigorous systems in place to build up academic profiles of each student in the school are now well established. The school is data rich and information is readily available to make comparisons within and across different teaching groups, including the additional support provided for students who need it.

The principal and assistant principal make regular and frequent lesson observations, keeping a close eye on the progress of students that need additional support. This enables them to respond quickly, modifying plans in the light of objective evidence and to make efficient use of resources. The school is persistent with students that require additional help until they accelerate their progress.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is informed by a detailed analysis of students' progress in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Data collected during the school year, as the plan is implemented, are used to monitor and evaluate the plan and the cycle continues. As a result, the school is responsive to changing patterns to allow it to continue to focus on further improving student achievement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Mill Basin School (PS 236)	∅	✓	+
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