



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Public School 361
3109 Newkirk Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11226**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS361 is an elementary school with 706 students from pre-kindergarten through 2nd grade. The school is culturally diverse and home to many newly arrived immigrants, in particular from English-speaking Caribbean countries, and from Haiti where French Creole is spoken. The school has 88% Black students, 6.9% Hispanic, 2.9% Asian and 1.9% White. The school is Title 1 eligible. For the 2005 – 2006 school year, attendance was 91.7%, slightly above that of similar schools and other schools in the City.

There are 11% special education students and 10% English language learners. Many students enter the school with limited language and social skills. The school has this year started to implement the 'Reading First' program as a key strategy to improve literacy at all levels.

Staff turnover has been relatively high in recent years, which has limited the school's ability to build capacity.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal works effectively with senior colleagues to promote a collaborative culture that supports the high quality of teaching and enables students to make good progress.
- The principal's clear vision that students must be enabled to 'to do the best they can' is recognized and shared by the entire faculty.
- The school continually evaluates its performance and seeks new ways to improve learning and student progress.
- The school uses assessment data to identify accurately those students at risk of falling behind or in need of additional support.
- A strong spirit of collaboration and commitment impacts on practice across the school and promotes a shared approach to improving students' progress.
- Professional development is organized very effectively, particularly for new teachers, and focused on needs identified by analysis of assessment outcomes and curriculum needs.
- There is a rich learning environment with classroom and corridor walls filled with outstanding displays of students' work and learning prompts.
- The school is well resourced, with a wide range of reading and teaching materials that are well used.
- Students respond well to their teachers, demonstrating politeness and respect to each other and to adults.
- Special education students are well integrated in collaborative team teaching classes.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the analysis of data by ethnicity to ensure that all groups of students are doing as well as they can.
- Improve interim diagnostic assessments of students' progress in all curriculum areas and use assessment outcomes to develop differentiation in order to address the needs of students with different learning needs.
- Focus on professional development for teachers of English language learners in order to improve the progress these students make.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

This is a well-developed school overall, with a few aspects that do not reach the same high standard. The principal works effectively with senior colleagues to promote a collaborative culture throughout the school and members of staff share her vision that every child must be enabled 'to do the best they can'. The school has been quick to identify possible barriers to continuous improvement, such as the challenge of working with large numbers of new teachers each year. Professional development is organized very effectively, particularly for new teachers, and is closely related to raising achievement and meeting the school's challenging goals. The school's aim is to develop well-rounded students. To this end, there is also a commitment to the arts, with an emphasis on art as well as a program of choral, violin and flutophone lessons for all, which contributes to building students' self-esteem and enhances their all round progress.

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 uses assessment data effectively to monitor and improve students' progress. Students are carefully tracked using a range of objective tests such as the Early Childhood Language Arts Assessment System (ECLAS-2), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Everyday Mathematics assessments, as well as school-generated assessment methods, including work samples, observation, and running records. Teachers have become increasingly competent in administering and analyzing the range of assessments. Assessments of the performance of the school's graduates indicate adequate yearly progress was achieved in English language arts, mathematics and science.

Assessment data is also used effectively to identify students at risk of falling behind or in need of additional support. It is also effectively used to update knowledge of the progress of English language learners and special education students. For example, formal assessment has identified the need to accelerate the academic progress of English language learners and the school has scheduled focused professional development to enhance the relevant teachers' skills in assessing and meeting their needs.

The school continually evaluates its performance based on its own past performance and compared with similar schools, using the findings to identify areas for improvement and to set relevant goals. For example, the school is working hard to increase the number of special education students who are decertified each year or moved into general education. Improving the progress of these students is another main focus of this year's professional development. There is, however, little monitoring by ethnic group.

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.

A strong spirit of collaboration has a positive impact on practice across the school and promotes a shared approach to improving student progress. Teachers, parents and students are involved in setting goals through discussion at relevant meetings. Teachers are familiar with students’ progress because they maintain running records for every student, are provided with assessment outcomes and collect students’ folders containing benchmarked examples of work. Proposed changes to the curriculum, such as the introduction of the Reading First program, are discussed by the faculty as a whole before being adopted. It is too early, however, to evaluate the impact of this program, which is in the first stages of implementation and the school has plans to improve interim diagnostic assessments of students’ progress to produce reliable data.

Particular consideration is given to identifying students at risk, and strategies to address obstacles are discussed in detail before being implemented. For example, the school is seeking to overcome the academic and behavioral issues that hinder the progress of some special education students. The academic intervention services team plays a key role in helping develop appropriate instructional programs, and useful resources are devoted to early intervention and small group instruction. Additional intervention is offered as part of the extended day.

Students get constructive feedback from the teachers, both informally - a student commented that ‘the teacher tells you how well you are doing’ - and in written comments on corrected work. Students know the level at which they are working and have a general idea of what they need to do to get to the next level.

The school seeks actively to involve more parents in planning the next steps in their child’s learning and there is a core of supportive parents. However, many parents are hard to reach despite ongoing efforts by the principal, the teachers and the parent coordinator. Parental input is valued and taken into account when goals and plans, especially individual education plans, are being reviewed and revised. Parents feel that the school keeps them fully informed, and that their children are individually assessed and their progress monitored to ensure their needs are met.

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.

Organization of teaching groups is based on the outcomes of objective assessments such as the Early Childhood Language Arts Assessment System. Assessment outcomes inform curriculum design. The school’s decision to implement the Reading First program arose from an identified need to improve literacy, which was based on assessment of students’ progress.

The school also uses its own evidence base to identify gifted and talented students and follows the district program when deciding on strategies appropriate to meet their needs. Singing and musical instrument lessons are provided for students who demonstrate an aptitude, and tracking indicates that these students make good progress across the curriculum. Students report that they particularly enjoy their musical activities.

There is a consistent approach to lesson planning. The principal and assistant principal carefully monitor plans and outcomes to ensure the school's goals are met. The school is working to further develop differentiation in instruction to meet the needs of students of different abilities to further support the school's efforts to promote individual students' progress.

The school is very well resourced with appropriate and attractive teaching materials. An excellent range of books is available throughout the school. There is a well-stocked and welcoming library, and students in all grades are supported in developing independent reading skills. The librarian contributes fully to the school's drive to improve students' enjoyment of books and to accelerate their progress.

Most students are engaged by the work. Students know what is expected of them. They feel valued, respected, and believe as several students commented, that 'learning is fun.' Behavior is generally good and students treat adults and each other with respect.

Although attendance rates have recently improved and are now just above those of similar schools and City schools, PS 361 is working hard to improve attendance as well as punctuality. The attendance procedures are known and understood by students and parents, and the relevant data is being used to target those families with poor attendance.

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.

Members of staff have a high level of commitment to the school and its students. The principal and assistant principal regularly visit classrooms and provide constructive formal and informal feedback. Teachers share ideas and resources and work closely in various collaborative groups to evaluate students' progress and to plan next steps in their learning. Administrators, staff members and parents meet in a variety of groups to share data, plan and set goals. Teachers also meet often in voluntary planning sessions before, during and after school.

The principal works effectively with senior colleagues to promote a collaborative culture throughout the school and members of staff share her vision that every child must be enabled 'to do the best they can'. Teachers feel fully consulted on key issues and are strongly committed to the collaborative process as a means of raising standards.

The school supports teachers by providing a variety of professional development opportunities both inside and outside the school. Faculty members are encouraged to share skills and good practice through collaborative discussion and by modeling or mentoring.

The school's ability to build capacity has been hampered by relatively large numbers of new teachers in recent years with the need for induction and support. However, the school has developed good systems of support to enable these teachers to become effective in a short period of time. The day-to-day running of the school is smooth and the school's procedures are well understood by all members of the school community and by parents.

The school has an active and supportive parent teacher association but is seeking to further increase parental involvement by a variety of methods.

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 proficient.

The school regularly assesses students' progress and uses the resulting information to make adjustments to its plans for raising standards. All aspects of the school's performance, including students' behavior, attendance and the quality of teaching, are also regularly reviewed and problems addressed where necessary.

The school collects and analyzes appropriate data to compare progress within and across its own classrooms, but use of comparative data from other schools in order to measure progress compared to similar schools is not as well developed as the school would wish. The school has also identified a need to further develop its interim diagnostic assessments in order to refine its analysis of the progress of groups and individual students.

Information generated by the school and by external diagnostic measures is used effectively to revise plans and modify overall goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 361	∅	✓	+
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	