



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Dr William Dorney School

Public School 72

**2951 Dewey Avenue
Bronx
NY 10465**

Principal: Margarita Colón

Dates of review: May 23 - 24, 2007

Reviewer: Florence Olajide

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

William Dorney School is a large elementary school with a student enrollment covering pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Of the 928 students enrolled, 58.45% are Hispanic, 28.2% are Black, 8.4% are White and 4.95% are Asian or other ethnic groups. About 6% of the students are English language learners and 25% are special education students. The school is designated as a 'barrier-free' learning community and has a purpose built wing to accommodate students in wheelchairs, walkers, and those with other special needs. At 72%, the proportion of students eligible for Title 1 funding is lower than that of similar schools but is in line with the average for City schools. The average attendance at 90.3% is lower than that of similar and City schools. Following the retirement of the previous principal, a new principal was appointed to the school in February 2007. An interim acting assistant principal was hired a month later bringing the number of assistant principals to two.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The new principal is dedicated and energetic and, in a short space of time has brought about positive changes which are appreciated by staff, students and their parents.
- Administrators have a very strong focus on establishing appropriate systems and structures to ensure that data is used effectively to improve teaching and accelerate students' learning.
- Leaders and many staff have a clear understanding of the need for change and what needs to be done.
- The enrichment and after school activities are much appreciated by students and their parents.
- Many staff are willing and eager to work hard at bringing about the necessary improvements.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish a coherent system for gathering and analyzing assessment data to determine the impact and usefulness of instructional and intervention programs.
- Develop and implement a Comprehensive Education Plan with measurable goals, which are closely aligned to the needs identified through data analysis.
- Devise a cohesive professional development program which supports the implementation of the school's goals and specifically develops teachers' skills in analyzing and using data.
- Use data effectively to identify and improve weaknesses in instructional practice.
- Ensure that the data gathered is used effectively to monitor the progress students make over time, and to identify appropriate early intervention strategies to prevent underperformance.
- Effect a culture change which encourages staff to work together collaboratively.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school.

The school is going through a period of significant change following the very recent appointment of the principal and the interim acting assistant principal. The principal, a strong advocate for the students, is a very capable leader who has already begun to inspire the confidence of the students and parents. Some of the staff are supportive of the principal and are committed to the impending changes. However, a minority of staff are resistant to change and to some degree hinder the school's efforts to improve. The other staff, while not fully supportive of the principal are beginning to take some of the changes on board. This division among staff is not conducive to a positive school climate. The school does not have robust systems to ensure that data underpins all aspects of its work. Consequently, many aspects of the school quality criteria are undeveloped. The principal has a clear understanding of the challenges facing the school and what to do about them. The prompt action she has taken since her appointment has meant that the school has already begun to address some of the areas that need improvement.

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 undeveloped.

The school collects a range of data from diagnostic and periodic assessments. However, the use of this data has been minimal because many staff lack a clear understanding of how to do so. Much of the data collected provides administrators and teachers with a view of the progress students have made at the end of each grade. However, data is not used to monitor the progress of individual students on a regular basis through the course of each year. This is also true of special education students who have individual education plans. Although the school keeps records of the performance of these students in the periodic assessments, the data is not kept in a manner so as to make it easily accessible to teachers. In addition, the students' progress is not tracked against the specific goals listed on their individual education plans.

Recently, school leaders have begun to look more closely at the data to note trends and patterns. They have begun to assess the school's performance in comparison to similar schools and to compare the performance of various groups within the school such as students from different ethnic backgrounds. For example, they are aware that the achievement of special education students and the current grade 3 is significantly below that of other groups. They are also aware of students' poor performance in English language arts.

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 undeveloped.

The current Comprehensive Education Plan does not reflect the school’s data. As a result, the new principal and her leadership team have begun the process of setting new goals for the school. However, this work is still at the early stages of development and goals are still being articulated. Some staff have been involved in the process, but the school is yet to fully engage all other staff in agreeing the goals. The emerging goals are pertinent to the school’s data although they have not been worded in a manner which ensures that they will be measurable. As goal setting is still at the earliest stages of implementation, the school does not yet have a coherent plan which identifies key priorities to be tackled within realistic timescales. Other than special education students, none of the other students have individual goals.

The principal’s detailed analysis of data indicates that special education students are the group most in need of improvement. The emerging goals indicate that this will be a key priority for the school in the coming year.

In the past, the school’s expectations of students have not been high enough and it has not readily provided parents and caregivers with timely and useful information about their children’s progress. The school has begun to consider how to improve the involvement of students, parents and caregivers in setting appropriate goals for students. To this end it is considering providing parents with interim progress reports during each semester. There are also plans to translate important information for parents into Spanish, which besides English, is the language spoken by the highest number of families.

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 undeveloped with some proficient features.

The school plans to reconstruct the entire literacy program, as English language arts is an area in which students’ performance is poor. The current curriculum map is not coherent. Therefore, there are plans to produce a new pacing chart, which identifies what students will be taught in each subject on a month-by-month basis. Until very recently, there has been very little accountability for teachers and very little use of data to inform instruction. Activities are not differentiated and often do not meet students’ needs. Students try hard in lessons to engage in the learning process. However, many find this difficult due to the inappropriate activities they are asked to do and because they do not understand what they are expected to learn. There are lost opportunities for teachers to share good practice among each other, as they do not have a common planning time. While relationships between staff and students are generally cordial, there are indications that some staff do not always treat students with respect. While some students would feel comfortable discussing their concerns with staff, others would prefer to keep their problems to themselves.

Amid this picture, there are some examples of good practice. School leaders have begun to explore how to use the data more effectively to improve instruction. In mathematics for example, the school has begun to analyze data more deeply. A very small number of

teachers are using this information to decide how to group students for effective teaching and to decide where remedial support might be necessary.

The principal has made appropriate budgeting and staffing decisions based on the current data. She has identified a need to employ someone to support students' literacy skills in the school library, and a teacher who can provide good quality instruction to students on school-based suspension. She has also identified the need for additional specialist science and social studies teaching in grade 4.

The principal has made attendance an immediate priority. Her quick intervention has resulted in the establishment of appropriate systems for improving attendance, which is now promoted daily. Although the impact of this is yet to be realized in terms of an improvement in the school's overall attendance figures, parents believe this is an area where the current leadership has made a significant impact on what previously was a culture of tardiness. Students and parents appreciate the after school recreation activities that the school offers.

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 undeveloped with some proficient features.

There is a growing respect among parents, students and staff for the principal, and an acknowledgement that the changes she is trying to bring about are for the benefit of the students. As one student explained, 'She's stern and tough, she knows how to handle stuff'. While the school generally runs smoothly, at times, communication between staff is poor and some feel that they do not always receive information in a timely manner. Neither do they understand why some decisions are made.

Although teachers have informal networks which some of them use to share good practice, there has been no alignment until recently between professional development decisions and the needs revealed by student data. There is no coherent professional development plan and many staff consider this to be a significant area of weakness. The principal has set up a committee which is currently devising a cogent professional development plan. She has already established some useful practices such as informal observations and 'learning walks'. The latter have involved the principal and other teachers conducting observations of teaching following an agreed format which focuses on specific aspects of instruction. These activities are beginning to provide the leadership with much needed information about the weaknesses in instructional practice. The principal has also conducted a survey of the professional development needs as perceived by each member of staff. Where new staff have been recruited recently, the principal has ensured that selection procedures are rigorous and reflect the needs of the school. As yet, there is no collaborative planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans. This is an area the school hopes to improve through the common planning time.

The school works with the youth development and support services, who have provided a conflict resolution course for students. This has led to a reduction in the numbers of students suspended for misdemeanors. There are future plans to extend this work to an anti-bullying program for students.

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 undeveloped.

The principal is aware of the need to establish structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year. She already recognizes the weaknesses in the school's improvement plan and in instructional practice. She is in the process of helping the school to formulate new and relevant goals which are firmly based on the school data. School leaders recognize the need to set short and long-term goals for students and to establish better systems for tracking their progress of over time.

The school's comparison data indicates that the performance of some grades is worse than others and that students do better in some subjects. It has begun to reflect on the implications of this and to consider appropriate types of intervention to help students improve their performance. The principal has used the available data to begin to devise an appropriate plan. Nonetheless, these practices are not yet fully established. Consequently, the school has not yet put in place a cycle of review, goal setting and implementation, in order to improve students' academic outcomes. However, there is no reason to doubt that the current leadership has the knowledge and capacity to bring about the required change. With appropriate professional development, and with the commitment and support of all staff, the school has capacity to improve further.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Dr William Dorney (PS 72)	∅	✓	+
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		