



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Samuel Mills Sprole School

Elementary School 032

**317 Hoyt Street
Brooklyn
NY 11231**

Principal: Deborah Ann Florio

Dates of review: March 10 - 11, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Stephen Walker

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Samuel Mills Sprole is an elementary school with 295 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 43% Hispanic, 37% Black, 16% White, 3% Asian and 1% American Indian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 36% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The school has pioneered a program for the inclusion of high-functioning autistic children in half-size collaborative team teaching classes. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 92.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides positive, collaborative and forward-looking leadership so that there is a very clear vision for the future development of the school.
- The school has high expectations for the students and encourages all children to experience success in their academic and personal development.
- The school has an exceptionally good understanding of the performance and progress of all groups of students in the school.
- Teachers keep very detailed assessment records for their classes that highlight the precise learning needs of their individual students.
- Students who require additional support with their work are very well supported by the academic intervention services.
- Children with autism integrate very well into the school and make good progress.
- The high quality of teaching encourages students to be fully engaged and motivated in the lessons
- Collaborative teaching and the effective use of assessment information ensures that excellent differentiated instruction meets the specific needs of students.
- There is a comprehensive program of professional development for all teachers and support staff in the school.
- A rigorous process of school evaluation and analysis of assessment information drives strategic planning and school improvements.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend further the extra-curricular and enrichment activities for all students in the school.
- Continue to develop further opportunities for more parents and caregivers to become fully involved in the learning of their children.
- Ensure that strategic plans for the continued improvement of the school have agreed priorities that are included in subject action plans.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Samuel Mills Sprole is a well-developed school that has some outstanding features. The principal provides positive, collaborative and forward-looking leadership so that there is a very clear vision for the future development of the school. There is an excellent understanding of assessment information and a desire to improve further the progress of students. Teachers keep very detailed assessment records for their classes and this enables them to highlight the precise learning needs of individual students. Children with autism integrate very well into the school and make good progress. Academic intervention services greatly assist students who require additional support with their work. The school recognizes the need to extend further the extra-curricular and enrichment activities for all students in the school. The standard of instruction in the school is very good and there is an excellent program of professional development for all teachers and support staff. The school is one of the Teachers College Collaborative Communities for best practices in Writer's Workshop. Collaborative teaching and the effective use of assessment information ensures that excellent differentiated instruction meets the specific needs of students. However, not all parents and caregivers are fully involved in the learning of their children. The school is continually seeking ways to improve further although it acknowledges the need for whole-school and subject plans to be more closely linked, for example ensuring that strategic plans have agreed priorities that are included in the subject action plans. The inquiry team identifies higher attaining students in grade 5 who are experiencing proficiency losses and provides additional support in vocabulary development through non-fiction literature.

The school has made good progress in addressing the key issues in the last Quality Review. The gender committee analyses the different performance of boys and girls in each subject and is now looking at learning styles. Small group work and additional resources are providing greater challenge for the higher-achieving students. The school is making good progress with independent learning and encouraging the students to be more reflective and take more responsibility for their work. An additional teacher is now in place to teach science to all groups in the school. Smartboards are now available for teachers in the classroom although the technology resources are not fully used as a learning tool for the students.

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

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

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

The school has an exceptionally good understanding of the performance and progress of all groups of students in the school. The principal and cabinet analyze the statutory and class assessments to gain a very clear view of progress in reading, writing and math across the classes and grades. The school quantifies the “proficiency gains” for each student and is able to highlight exact rates of progress in each class. Very good systems record the performance and progress of English language learners and special education students. There are good records on the social development of students with autism. The school makes a thorough analysis of previous performance and examines the trends at each grade level. The school has identified the loss of proficiency in grade 4 over the last three years and is scrutinizing this issue through the inquiry team. The gender committee has made a detailed analysis of the differences in attainment between boys and girls. It is now researching the learning styles that may support boys better in the classroom. The school undertakes a comprehensive study of progress differences between ethnic groups and highlights some underperformance amongst Hispanic students. The principal makes a detailed analysis of similar schools in the peer group and visits other schools to examine successful practice in enrichment activities and academic intervention. Teachers are developing their understanding of the use of assessment information through the use of the ARIS and ACUITY systems.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.

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

The school mantra is that “every PS 32 student is an individual case study”. Each teacher keeps records of specific skills in reading, writing and math so that individual areas of weakness are targeted during lessons. All students have a predictive grade in English and math and student progress is reviewed at regular grade meetings. All students also have reading, writing and math learning goals and action plans to achieve these goals. Each teacher has a data and accountability checklist to ensure that there is consistency of assessment records across the school. Students who require additional support with their work receive excellent support from the academic intervention services during the school day, after school and through the Saturday Academy. Struggling readers are well supported through the Wilson, Focus on Fluency and Kaplan reading programs. Paraprofessionals provide effective help for many students through “push-in” and “pull-out” strategies in literacy and math lessons. The autistic students are extremely well integrated into “micro-inclusion classes” where an additional teacher and support staff allow sustained work in small groups.

The school has high expectations for the students and encourages all children to experience success in their academic and personal development. The principal emphasizes in monthly assemblies that “our students are the world’s greatest”. Parents and caregivers greatly value the work of the school and one parent said that “Samuel Mills Sprole is the school of the future”. Parents are alerted quickly if their child is having learning difficulties and requires intervention support. The school uses every opportunity to invite parents to information workshops. Regular progress reports for parents are detailed and informative. Attendance at parent-teacher conferences shows considerable improvement over the last year. The school is aware of the need to develop further opportunities for more parents and caregivers to become fully involved in the learning of their children.

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

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

The balanced literacy program through the Teachers College and the Everyday Mathematics program provide regular assessments which highlight the skill areas and learning needs of the students. Teachers are also using the Lucy Caulkins units of study for primary writing, which is raising the quality of written work across the grades. Science is now part of the curriculum map which includes social studies and physical education. The curriculum is broadened by the creative arts program of art and music although the experience in music is limited to learning the keyboard. The majority of students attend the community based after-school program that enhances learning. The school acknowledges the need to further extend the extra-curricular and enrichment activities for all students in the school.

The high quality of teaching ensures that students are fully engaged and motivated in the lessons. Collaborative teaching and the effective use of assessment information ensures that excellent differentiated instruction meets the specific needs of students. Teachers plan lessons well and students often work in groups according to their learning needs. Teachers are increasingly encouraging more independent work amongst the students. High-quality displays provide a stimulating environment for learning in classrooms and hallways. Teachers are now using smart boards but the school is not fully developing the use of technology as a tool for learning. The high degree of mutual respect between students and teachers leads to a very positive atmosphere in classrooms and around the school. The staff pledge includes the promise “to be respectful to the students and be responsible for their development”. Attendance has a high priority in the school. It is rigorously monitored and good attendance rewarded with “certificates of recognition” for both teachers and students.

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

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

There is a comprehensive program of professional development for all teachers in the school. Most teachers have a formal observation by the principal with detailed, diagnostic comments at least once each year. There are regular “walkthroughs” with feedback through the “student engagement and classroom environment checklists”. Intervisitations between teachers are well established and encourage the sharing of good practices. Teachers adopt an open approach to advice and support. The literacy and math coaches provide very effective support for teachers and the principal encourages staff to attend external training particularly through Hunter College. All these have a strong impact on improving instruction. There are weekly mandated lunchtime training sessions and many staff attend additional voluntary study groups. Common preparation periods provide opportunities for grade teachers to share ideas and support each other with planning. New teachers are very well supported through the New Teachers Support Group and their teacher leaders.

The school runs very smoothly from day to day and the calm atmosphere around the school supports student learning and progress. The Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports program is successfully encouraging students to be “safe, respectful, prepared and responsible”. A good range of guidance and student services provides valuable support for the academic and personal development of the students. All students with Asperger’s Syndrome take part in the very effective Social Development Integration Program. The introduction of monthly assemblies, the continuation of circle time and “the second steps social studies program” encourages a positive school climate. The school receives good support from very effective partnerships with a number of community organizations. Hunter College and New York University support the program for the inclusion of students with autism. The after-school programs are well organized by the Good Shepard Services and Arts Connection support resident artists in the school.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

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

The principal provides positive, collaborative and forward-looking leadership so that there is a very clear vision for the future development of the school. She is very approachable and the teachers, parents and students greatly respect her expertise and enthusiasm. Her cabinet team works well with the teachers in order to put the vision into practice. A rigorous process of school evaluation and analysis of assessment information drives strategic planning and school improvements. There are clear goals, strategies and benchmarks within the Comprehensive Education Plan. The principal’s performance review also contains very specific targets for improvement in the school. Links between the whole-school plan and subject plans are not strong, however. For example, it is acknowledged that there is a need now to discuss key issues for next year so that the new strategic plan has agreed priorities that are included in the subject action plans. There is a very good system of assessment throughout the school in order to monitor and evaluate student progress. There are predicted goals and action plans for each student and teachers are fully accountable for the proficiency gains of their classes. Regular assessments ensure that student weaknesses are identified and support is put in place. The school is continually evaluating its performance and seeking new ways to improve the learning and progress of the students. Samuel Mills Spole continues to strive for excellence as it moves to the next stage of its impressive development.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Samuel Mills Sprole School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

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

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

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

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

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

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

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

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

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

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped