



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Public School K53

Elementary-High School

**720 Livonia Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Gloria Sorkin

Dates of review: March 25 - 27, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Frank Jones

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 53 is an elementary-high school with 386 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 52% Black, 33% Hispanic, 10% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 73% of the students enrolled and girls account for 27%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 84.4%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

This exceptional school is extremely well led by the principal and her team. The majority of teachers are experienced and bring this to bear as they strive successfully to address the diverse and complex needs of the student population. The wealth of pertinent data they collect, astutely analyze and disseminate is particularly well utilized to inform student Individual Education Plans. (IEP's) Further considered refinements at classroom level enable teachers to develop highly effective, differentiated strategies to improve and enhance student skills and learning. Related services and teachers combine particularly effectively to put into place a multi-disciplinary approach that promotes personalized learning and focuses on the holistic needs of each student. This ensures that the personal, social, emotional and communication skills of each student are met. Relationships at all levels and between all parties are extremely good and reflect the care and mutual respect that the community has for its members. Students feel safe and well cared for and know that there is always someone to help them when they need it. The faculty is dedicated and works exceptionally hard to ensure that students achieve their potential. Parents recognize this and speak very highly of the numerous streams of communication that provide them with support and regular information and enable them to be meaningful partners in their child's education.

The broad and rich curriculum is delivered using a thematic approach. This provides valuable opportunities to practice, learn, reinforce and rehearse skills in a practical context that brings relevance and realism to the activities being undertaken. Students thoroughly enjoy and benefit from the community based learning they engage in. On these occasions they work diligently and reflect an aim of the school which is, 'to empower children so they can advocate for themselves'. In this, the school is very successful. This is a true learning community and teachers engage readily in the professional development opportunities open to them. The school is now beginning to set individualized differentiated goals for teachers but they are not yet aligned to the supportive and informative classroom observations that take place regularly. The annual goals that the school sets for itself are well thought out and provide direction and purpose. They are time-scaled but do not contain interim benchmarks against which to measure progress. The school exudes high expectations both for the students and the staff. The learning environment is testimony to this in the richness that pervades it. The principal and her assistants make a formidable and powerful team which has at its heart the desire that each student is given the skills to fulfill their potential.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is rigorous in collecting, analyzing and disseminating a wealth of pertinent data to inform detailed Individual Education Plans, which are further refined to focus on teaching strategies that optimize learning.
- The exceptional relationships across and within the school community ensure that students develop in a culture of trust and mutual respect.
- High expectations pervade the school and exhibit themselves in the learning environment which promotes and reinforces achievements for all students.
- The complex, specific and diverse needs of the student population is extremely well addressed through a range of targeted, differentiated activities which provide personalized learning.
- The thematic delivery of a rich and varied curriculum enables students to rehearse, reinforce and develop skills in a practical setting that enhances learning.
- Related service providers and teachers collaborate exceptionally well and utilize their talents to ensure that a multi disciplinary approach is implemented to meet the holistic requirements of each student.
- The principal and her assistants provide extremely good, focused leadership to a staff that is highly committed and passionate about their work and the students they serve.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop with each teacher, specific differentiated goals that are aligned to Professional Teaching Standards, originate in classroom observations and are designed to further improve their instruction.
- Formalize meetings with teachers to discuss the progress and skills acquisition of the students that they teach and provide relevant support as required.
- Ensure that each goal in the Comprehensive Education Plan has interim benchmarks so that progress can be robustly monitored and adjustments made as necessary.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

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

The school collects an extensive range of pertinent State and school generated data. In this way the school has an extremely clear idea of the performance and progress of each student. Standardized assessment data is obtained for students as required but the predominant source of information is provided by the New York State Alternative Assessments (NYSAA). The different data sources are necessary for the school to address precisely the range of complex and specific needs of the student population. Administrators and all teachers are involved in the detailed analysis of all available information. The school is therefore well informed about the academic and functional skills of each student. It uses this information extremely effectively to develop Individual Education Plans (IEP's) plus attendant learning and teaching strategies.

Brigance is the key tool used for alternative assessments and teachers make good use of it in the goal setting process. Where the goal is insufficiently specific, teachers use Alternate Grade Level Indicators to further hone them. Student information is recorded and updated carefully in data binders so that teachers have an accurate view of the impact of their teaching. Importantly, teachers supplement this data with their own refined assessments, which illustrate the day-to-day progress that students are making. The student binders provide an ongoing assessment of learning but are key drivers in the effective planning of targeted activities to enhance further development of skills and knowledge. This database is enhanced by numerous assessments and teaching programs such as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Alternate Grade Level Indicators (AGLI's) and Scantron, to enrich the data base they already have. The extremely good use made of these assessments ensures that the personal, social, academic, and communication needs of each student are successfully addressed.

The school is vigilant in meeting the needs of all students. A key and extremely effective area of the school is the community learning that many students are engaged in. Each work study site is assessed for the skills that students will require to benefit from placement. Similarly the functional and interpersonal skills of each student are carefully considered and deficits addressed until there is a match between student skill set and work place requirements. This extremely careful attention to detail carried out by the school is a crucial factor in the success, enjoyment and progress that students experience in work place settings.

Parents are effusive in their appreciation for the high level of communication that takes place, enabling them to be informed about their child and therefore share and contribute to their learning process. Besides the more formal methods such as report cards and parent teacher conferences, daily communication occurs by phone, email, personal contact and communication books. Parents at one site explained how much they valued

the 'daily progress report', which outlined their child's weekly goals and performance that day. Parents stated that they were able to discuss with and support their child more by using this up to date information.

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 outcomes from the analysis of all pertinent data lead to tightly focused goals in the students IEP's. Goals developed by teachers and related services, including behavior and transitional plans, encompass all aspects of student development. This holistic approach ensures that the IEP's are key documents and drive strategies that enable learning to be accurately differentiated according to identified needs. These very well written plans identify suitable incremental learning steps, timeframes, quantifiable assessments and success criteria for each student. Teachers are adept at interpreting them and modifying tasks so that students are challenged but meet with success. The progress made towards achieving these goals is reviewed regularly and evaluated formally three times per year. Therefore, teachers and administrators are able to carefully monitor and track student performance and make timely adjustments as the situation arises.

The school's Comprehensive Education Plan is an effective document in providing direction to the school. The senior leaders contribute to it and there is a synergy with the administrator's goals which provides cohesion and a collective purpose across the sites. However, an absence of benchmarks against which to measure progress detracts from the ability of the school to robustly monitor developments and make revisions if required.

Administrators utilize available data scrupulously to monitor the pace and progress of students and the impact of the programs and strategies that are implemented across the school. Valuable informal discussions occur between administrators and teachers about student performance. This enables revisions to be made swiftly to student programs or placements so that deficits are eliminated and learning potential maximized. This unremitting attention to detail provides each student with a relevant, high quality focused and apposite program. This reflects the high expectations which pervade the school and are acknowledged by the wider community. The learning environment is rich in content and the hallways become extensions of the classrooms. Therefore, students are constantly exposed to and reminded of what they can aspire to.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

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

The rich and varied curriculum meets the complex, specific and diverse needs of the student population it serves. The school has adopted a thematic approach to curriculum delivery. This enables students to practice, refine and learn new skills in a practical context where activities have relevance and realism. Learning is further enhanced as related service providers and teachers combine their expertise to provide a composite

and comprehensive package of support for each student. This multi-disciplinary approach to learning ensures that skills are developed and the holistic needs of students are very well catered for. Teachers are extremely adept at selecting meaningful activities for each student. This high quality differentiation provides a close match of task to student need and provides personalized learning for each student. On-going evaluation of the impact of instruction is commonplace, enabling teachers to realign their teaching to ensure that the best approaches are utilized and maximum effect is realized. Use of data sources, such as Scantron, identifies deficits in learning which are then swiftly and effectively addressed. Teachers working with students on the autistic spectrum apply a range of suitable programs such as TEACCH, PECS, or ABA as their prime instructional approaches. These valuable methodologies address sensory deficits and encourage a level of independence as they encourage students to work to a pattern as they practice newly learned skills. Teachers are extremely diligent and spend many hours developing their own materials to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of the students they teach. The use of information technology is beneficial across the school as it engages with students and enhances their performance. For instance, in one bi-lingual class students were preparing a multi-media presentation following research on various websites. The teacher had cleverly related this to Hispanic countries and asked students to prepare a travel brochure. Students reported that they greatly enjoyed this method of learning which added additional interest to an already engaging curriculum.

The quality of relationships across and within the school community is exceptional. Students report that they feel well supported in school and feel confident in asking for help when the need arises. Students are respectful and sensitive to the needs of their peers and develop in a culture of mutual respect and trust. Parents appreciate this and are quick to praise the school for the concern and attention that is given, not only to their children but also to them, as part of a collegiate approach to the developmental process.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The principal and her assistants have an extremely good understanding of the quality of learning and teaching from regular classroom observations. During these times they are able to offer timely advice and teachers benefit greatly from the expertise of the assistant principal with responsibility in this area. Teachers welcome the support and challenge that these occasions offer as it provides solutions to problems and enhances their own professional expertise. One teacher, new to the school, was very positive about the support she received from colleagues and the value of classroom observations. She said, "Great feedback leads me in the right direction." Administrators monitor the impact of these observations by analyzing student performance outcomes.

The inquiry team has used data effectively to select students for its target group and monitors their progress in respect of the interventions they put into place. The team has identified some of the success factors through in-depth analysis and discussion and their research is helping to pinpoint some of the barriers. The team's work is having a powerful impact on the teaching and testing strategies being employed across the school.

Teachers do not have individual professional development plans with goals that emanate from classroom observations, but have the relevant information to refine their

practice. However, teachers are enthusiastic about the range and quality of professional development opportunities that are available to them. The impact of this training is evident in the high quality of teaching and the resultant beneficial effect on learning. Teachers are being encouraged to evaluate their own performance and select development strands from the professional teaching standards. They see the point and purpose of this and enjoy directing their own areas for development.

The school makes extremely good use of its links with the community to enhance and enrich the experiences and opportunities that they can provide. As a result, students benefit immensely from these opportunities to interact in the community through work placements, visits to museums or bowling.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 school analyzes the data that it has at its disposal to carefully monitor student outcomes. This perceptive appraisal ensures that the school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas of further development. The school places evaluation strategies high on its list of priorities so that relevant issues that arise are identified and addressed rapidly. Importantly, it is not satisfied with its current level of success. As a result, the school is robust in the on-going appraisal of its position and effective in developing improvement strategies to further enhance the quality of education it provides. Goals set are well thought through and are data driven so that direction and purpose are secure. The constant involvement of administrators in supporting teachers ensures that they have first-hand knowledge of what is working well and what needs to be addressed; whether it is support with practice or adjustments to student programs. Although communication between administrators and staff is frequent, often the meetings are informal or incidental. The leadership is aware of the need to formalize these processes so that time can be utilized more efficiently. Teachers regularly evaluate the quality of their own instruction and, as a result, modify their approaches appropriately. The extremely good use of differentiation to match tasks accurately to student need enables individuals to make significant progress. Teaching is of a predominantly high quality on a consistent basis. The progress being made by students against their goals are formally evaluated three times a year and are reported to parents. However, these are generally just administrative procedures as teachers are assessing the impact of their instruction on a daily basis and making revisions to activities as required. This acute attention to detail has an extremely positive impact on the skills and knowledge acquisition of the students.

Clear policies and practices across sites bring cohesion to practice, while at the same time enabling them to secure their own identity to reflect the nature of the students they teach. The school is very much a learning organization where all constituents benefit from interaction with each other. The principal is extremely well respected, as are the assistant principals for the leadership qualities they demonstrate and the undoubted expertise they have. This results in a vibrant school with a clear vision that has the capacity to further improve.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Public School K053	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				X
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?				X
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?				X
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?				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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?				X
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?				X
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?				X
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X

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

<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?				X
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?				X
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X

Quality Review Scoring Key

△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
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