

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

Public School 138

Elementary - High School 138

**144 East 128 Street
New York
NY 10035**

Principal: Jacqueline Keane

Dates of review: March 27, 30, 31, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 138 is a middle-high school with 423 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 35% Black, 51% Hispanic, 8% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 72% of the students enrolled and girls account for 28%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 84.5%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

This District 75 school is located on seven sites across Manhattan. The main site is located in PS30, an East Harlem elementary school. The community school off-sites are located in two elementary, two middle, one middle/high and one high school. The school serves students who have a range of disabilities including severe to profound developmental disabilities, autism, severe emotional difficulties, hearing impairment and fragile physiological conditions. Approximately 85% of students participate in alternate assessment programs and 15% in standardized assessment programs.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Parents come from afar to source the sensitive and informed education that the dedicated teachers, staff and administration provide for the students at this school. They gratefully recognize the everyday, and at times remarkable, successes the school facilitates. One father recounted how doctors had said his son “would not be able to do anything, but, since attending this school, his progress is exponential. He now articulates his wants.” At all levels, staff take collective responsibility for the well-being of every student, believing in their ability to achieve. This respectful, dignified and calm approach engenders trust and enables students to take risks as learners. Students learn to self-advocate and make positive choices. Teachers plan carefully structured lessons to meet the requirements of the students’ individualized education plans, with access for all to a broad and relevant curriculum. Related service providers and paraprofessionals provide strong support and partnerships enhance the students’ experience. However, some lessons miss opportunities to harness students’ active participation. Written feedback on student work does not give sufficient detail about reasons for success with detailed next steps to secure improvement. Where possible, teachers involve parents and students suitably in setting goals through sharing information about assessments and needs. To improve student outcomes, the school has established systems and calendars for gathering and analyzing information. Although valuable, this does not encompass all content areas. Goals across the school are relevant, but do not target every subject and interim monitoring is not always precise. As a result, the school’s strategic planning is not comprehensive. This community of lifelong learners reflectively shares expertise and benefits from formal and informal professional development that leaders facilitate. As one teacher said, “The way things are done here, there’s expertise. Organized; planned; open-minded; if you don’t know, you seek it out.” However, teachers have not yet developed formal professional growth plans in collaboration with administrators. Leaders, staff and teachers share great loyalty to the school and its vision to help students toward less restrictive environments. Seasoned or new, they embrace necessary changes collegially and purposefully, in their quest to continually improve students’ outcomes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Leaders and faculty routinely gather and analyze detailed information for every service category to notice trends in many areas of students' academic, social and life skills performance in order to establish realistic goals.
- Teachers and leaders work with parents and students, according to their cognitive level, to exchange ongoing information about performance and progress, tailoring programs to each individual's real-life needs.
- The dedicated teachers and leaders work strenuously together to share high expectations with the school community that students can make good progress in social, emotional and academic growth.
- The cohesive administration ensures that all students experience a broad and relevant curriculum with teachers and paraprofessionals working with related service providers and partners productively to provide equal access, valuable individual programs and support.
- Working within a common reflective framework, leaders carefully build teachers' and staff's capacity so they benefit from supportive lesson observations, pertinent professional development and regular opportunities to collaborate.
- The calm atmosphere throughout the school reflects the respect, trust and dignity that the committed staff extend to all constituents, acting as caring role models for students, who respond accordingly within the shared vision to promote students' independence and self-advocacy.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine data systems further within service categories, to enable efficient gathering and analysis of ongoing information across all content areas to build a comprehensive picture of individual, group and school performance.
- Develop clear goals for students and groups that reference subject skills and conceptual understanding, ensuring that precise interim measurement detail enables robust monitoring of progress toward goals in order to monitor student learning securely across all subjects.
- Explore ways to involve students consistently as active partners in learning and provide written feedback that details why they have been successful with clear next steps for improvement to strengthen their ownership of learning.
- Build on current valuable practice to formalize individual teacher professional growth plans, in collaboration with administration and peers, to evaluate the impact of professional development on teacher skills and student outcomes.

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 proficient.

Leaders adeptly analyze the range of relevant data that teachers routinely gather for different service categories. In this way, summative and formative information provides an ongoing overview at individual, class, group and school level. Teachers use Brigance Inventories Assessments, or Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills, for alternate assessment students, and State exam results for standardized assessment students, as the data backbone. Teacher-made tests and observations, Acuity and Scantron supplement this information to provide a useful view of the students' skills and progress in areas such as math, literacy, science and functional life skills.

Although instruction interweaves other subjects, teachers do not collect data formally about student learning across all content areas. This means that leaders do not formally analyze all subjects at whole school level. However, the analysis of data gathered, including for attendance and behaviors, is thorough. Administrators and faculty note trends over several years for service categories, by gender, ethnicity or detail relevant to the school. In this way, their analysis of attendance by students who use school transportation is commendable. The administration suitably disaggregates alternate assessment data by grade to note anomalies and discrepancies. Similarly, leaders examine the State test relating to the few standardized assessment English language learner students. Teachers design tools for their classroom data collection. At present, there is no uniform classroom tool specific to each service category's requirements.

Teachers usefully engage in formal and informal exchange of information with parents. Conferences and individualized education planning meetings rightly punctuate the year as required. The new website supplements report cards four times a year, personal contact, email and daily communication notebooks. Students share this information relative to their cognitive development level. Those on behavior plans use their bankbooks to log points awarded and weekly *Power of Choice* sheets go home to parents. Specific to each service category, teachers and leaders endeavor to keep parents informed regularly about performance and progress on programs, such as *Getting Ready to Learn*, *Handwriting without Tears* or the Tango communication program. Visual schedules help parents reinforce routines at home, using symbols and pictures the student recognizes.

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 proficient.

Using all available assessment data, teachers carefully work with parents, and older students when applicable, to devise meaningful goals for their individualized education plans. The transition team meets monthly to oversee students’ person-centered plans. Related service providers and academic intervention providers tailor their provision in the light of an analysis of students’ needs. Teachers meet weekly by cohort to share ideas and ensure that they are meeting objectives toward goals. In this way, with each student’s individualized education plan driving all decision-making, teachers and leaders plan, review and revise regularly.

The positive behavior intervention team maintains a similar close watch on students’ progress toward personal goals, and notes the impact on school goals, through regular data analysis. These goals, and those in the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan, derive correctly from data analysis and so form realistic targets. However, across the school there are no clear goals for some subjects relating to students’ subject specific mastery of skills and concepts. In this way, the comprehensive overview of students’ learning is not sufficiently robust. The administration engages with the school leadership team at monthly meetings in examining varied sources of information, such as the Learning Environment Survey, and student data to establish meaningful school-wide goals. They review progress toward meeting these goals periodically throughout year. Although data-driven, interim monitoring is not undertaken against quantifiable indicators, so that the evaluation of progress toward goals is not secure.

Teachers and staff show great loyalty and dedication to the school and its students, convinced of every student’s ability to make progress. As one teacher rightly summarized, “I have hope in my students and believe they can achieve.” Whatever the challenges that students face, leaders and faculty strive to explain and maintain high expectations in the school community. Accordingly, leaders take parent-teacher association meetings to different sites at different times. Faculty involves students in decision-making and explicit attendance policies are effective. Staff work to surmount obstacles, clarify misconceptions and harness parental support, so all service categories set homework for students. Clear expectations mean that students understand routines, consequences and rewards. One student explained that, “Teachers help you deal with you.” As a pleasing consequence, so far this year, 19 students have moved to less restrictive environments.

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 proficient.

Leaders ensure that each student experiences a broad curriculum. Within this framework, teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers skillfully enable access for all students through modifications, adaptive communication devices and symbols. In this way, students with profound disabilities sit in a circle, sharing enjoyment and awareness of rhythm as they participate in a music lesson. At the high school level, activities such as art and computer clubs allow students different ways of experiencing

success. Vocational training opportunities offer real-life learning at worksites in a mailroom, café and library.

The cohesive administration ensures that all students experience a relevant curriculum, so teachers and paraprofessionals work productively with related service providers and partners to provide valuable individual programs and support. Leaders encourage creativity and service providers integrate their expertise into classrooms. One sterling example saw a small class working on math skills at differing levels in three groups skilfully led by a teacher, a related service provider and a paraprofessional. The bilingual instructional program suitably addresses specific student needs. Pilot programs equally provide for some groups' requirements, as in the "sensory scanning" individualized program at the Park West site.

Within lessons teachers work alongside staff in structured classroom environments that differentiate instruction for group and individual needs. Some lessons miss opportunities for students' active participation in order to secure engagement. Written feedback does not encourage student ownership of extending learning by giving next steps for improvement and reasons for success.

The cohesive administration and staff set the tone for calm, purposeful care within this nurturing environment. Strong interpersonal relationships between all constituents evidence trust, safety and respect, so that students feel able to take risks as learners. In this way, they make notable progress in social, emotional and academic growth.

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 proficient.

Leaders work at embedding capacity building in addressing school and student needs. Paraprofessionals participate equally in training alongside teachers. Needs surveys aligned with the Comprehensive Educational Plan rightly inform professional development opportunities. Leaders harness teachers' strengths, notably to the benefit of the expanded inquiry team process. The team valuably includes a speech service provider. Its work is systematic, carefully structured and relevant to large sections of the student population.

Teachers reflectively seek to improve practice. Some pursue external professional development opportunities, roundly endorsed by administrators, at their own expense. The "*structured classroom*" or *Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children (TEACCH)* classrooms result in visitors from the United States and overseas viewing practice that addresses the needs of autistic students. Staff from all sites meet together at least three times a year, which strengthens the sense of community and consistency of practice.

Leaders and teachers valuably use the *Professional Teaching Standards* as a common reflective lens in discussing professional expertise. Lesson observations carefully reference these standards. Teachers have recently begun to devise personal growth plans. At an early stage of implementation, they lack specific measurability criteria to enable robust monitoring, but correctly match with individual and school needs. However, not all teachers from every site have devised individual plans in collaboration with administrators or peers.

Students benefit from productive partnerships and liaison with campus schools such as Park West High School. Worksites, such as CVS Pharmacy, Donors Choose and internal placements provide valuable vocational experience for all eligible students. One student has recently gained immediate employment as a direct result. Grants valuably enable students to take part in theatrical productions. Links with Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy, MOMA and the Henry Street Settlement similarly enrich students' experience. Students and families profit from the school's comprehensive support rooted in knowledge of the student as an individual. One parent encapsulated this, saying, "They're so tuned into what's with him."

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 proficient.

The school has clear structures to review and revise plans and goals throughout the year. Teachers' assessment pacing calendars suitably reinforce accountability. The Comprehensive Educational Plan, which aligns with the principal's performance review, forms the basis for the school leadership team's discussion and monitoring at least twice a year, depending on the goal. Teachers formally revisit students' individualized education plans quarterly, or more frequently if necessary. Monthly faculty meetings by sites cover areas of common ground to note progress and instigate initiatives when indicated. Related service providers also feed relevant information regarding students' incremental progress back into whole school and class data collection on a regular basis.

As a result of examining School Wide Information Systems incident data, leaders have rightly introduced a positive behavior support system model to supplement the existing *Power of Choice* program. This shows promising results in decreasing reportable incidents in the period October - February. Similarly, the *Getting Ready to Learn* program being trialed in two classes demonstrates a positive impact on students' ability to focus and face the day.

Leaders have an accurate overview of school performance rooted in their careful analysis of data, although this does not rigorously encompass teacher professional growth plans or formal evaluation of students' progress in all subjects. Teachers and leaders show pro-active commitment and capacity to implement necessary changes to improve student outcomes. Staff sensitively respond to students' and family's needs. One parent gratefully acknowledged, "Patience is the word," while another commended the school for being "family-friendly, working with parents and listening." As a result, the unified school community includes some strong parental support. Constituents share a coherent vision for each student to self-advocate and develop independence.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Public School 138	△	▷	✓	+
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.

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
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.

To what extent do school leaders...	Δ	➤	✓	+
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.

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
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							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed