



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The John J Driscoll School

Elementary School 016

**80 Monroe Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10301**

Principal: Vincenza Gallassio

Dates of review: October 23 - 24, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Peter Lewis

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The John J Driscoll School is an elementary school with 1043 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 31% Black, 55% Hispanic, 7% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 31% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007-2008 was 90.4 %. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 69% eligibility. Although occupying one site, the school is in two buildings separated by a recently refurbished recreation and sports area. This has posed challenges in ensuring consistency between the two locations.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school makes good use of a wide range of academic and personal data in understanding the progress made by its students, and in reviewing the impact of whole school developments. This has been very effective in improving the focus that teachers and leaders have on improving student achievement. Considerable effort has gone into making sure that teachers have access to data that helps them plan according to the different needs of their students, and to ongoing training in its use. However, although lessons are generally planned to take account of students' different needs as identified by item analyses, teachers do not consistently plan to take account of students' different starting points. Equally, teachers' planning is not sufficiently detailed, particularly in relation to how they and their students will recognize what has been learned. The school has begun to develop plans to address this. Parents value the regular contact that they have with teachers. They know the requirements of the curriculum in each grade, and appreciate the detailed information that they receive, particularly in English language arts and math, which tells them how well their children are doing.

Goal setting has developed well from the last review. Level goals in English language arts and math are set and reviewed regularly through the year. This practice is being used as a model to further refine the curriculum-based goals that are set in social studies and in science. Links have begun to be established between subjects, and the school is working to refine this in, for example, evaluating students' use of particular genres of writing in social studies. The school does not yet set targets across the whole year, which would assist it in establishing accurate grade and whole school goals for different subjects. Because of this, the school is hampered in its ability to judge the effectiveness of curriculum modifications and innovations, such as the increasing links between subjects to teach generic skills such as comprehension. Nonetheless, the school has established good strategies of analysis, monitoring and evaluation. It makes effective use of these in identifying areas for both whole school improvement and for teachers' development, although these lack detail in terms of required actions, success criteria and timescales. Throughout the school, there is a strong commitment to students' personal and academic development.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has moved well in developing a wide range of data so that teachers, students and parents know the rate at which learning is taking place.
- The strong focus on data, successfully promoted by the principal, has been highly effective in focusing the work of leaders and teachers on student achievement.
- Parents understand and appreciate the high expectations set and clearly communicated by the school in helping them support their children's learning.
- A good range of analyses and observations is used well by leaders in understanding the school's effectiveness.
- Professional development is carefully planned and is successful in bringing about improvement in the interpretation of data.
- The strongly shared commitment to students' personal development and to their learning drives all members of the school community.

What the school needs to improve

- Further refine practice in student goal setting by ensuring that goals are set across the full year so that progress can be monitored more closely in relation to students' earlier achievement.
- Ensure that whole school strategic planning includes clear actions, timescales and success criteria.
- Continue to improve consistency in teaching by ensuring that all planning includes precise statements of what will be learned and the activities to be followed by students of different capabilities.
- Develop teachers' ability to lead rigorous discussion with individuals, groups, and classes to improve their assessment of students' knowledge and understanding of identified learning objectives.

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 has focused its work effectively on extending and refining the range of data available on student achievement, and in communicating this to teachers. Alongside this, teachers have been trained in interpreting and using assessment data in their planning and in tracking students' progress. As a result, there is a good understanding of features of students' learning, particularly in English language arts, math and science. Leaders and teachers regularly review test and other data to determine strengths and weaknesses in learning. The school's good understanding of the performance of different groups of students ensures that variations in achievement are understood and used in planning action. The effectiveness of the school's dual language program, for example, has been improved following careful consideration of test scores for this group of students, while the school's clear understanding of dips in the progress made by boys led to the acquisition of books with their interests in mind.

The school has established good quality reporting to parents which, as well as keeping them informed about their children's progress, positively assists parents in helping them to support their children at home. Parents appreciate the quality of information that the school makes available, and teachers' availability to discuss their children's progress. In looking to further improve the range of information, the school has begun to make use of the teachers' college writing assessments. Early data suggests that these provide a closer and more continuous focus on writing development.

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.

Leaders and teachers collaborate well in reviewing patterns of student learning, and in using the information to set goals for achievement. A good range of personal and academic information is passed on to the next teacher at the start of the year to form the basis for setting targets. The process is particularly well refined in English language arts and math, with levels of achievement and scale scores being used in focusing short term goals. This practice is being extended into social studies and science, to further refine teachers' use of required curriculum progression to identify individual students' next learning points. In all these subjects, goals are set four times a year rather than across the year as a whole. The school acknowledges that this hampers it in establishing whole school goals that are accurately derived from its targets for class and grade achievement. Nonetheless, students are proud of the fact that they know the achievement that is expected of them in different subjects, and the steps that they need

to take in securing success. This reflects the high expectations that are a feature of the school and that are highly valued by parents.

The school's improvement plan is comprehensive and drawn from an accurate analysis of student achievement data. Leaders, teachers and parents collaborate well in identifying areas for improvement in broad terms. As a result, there is a good level of understanding of planned change. Detail is lacking, however, particularly in relation to the criteria by which success will be judged, and the timescales over which change will take place. This means that, while the school monitors the process of change well, it cannot always be certain that it is on track toward achieving its aims.

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.

A close focus on curriculum development has led to a broad and enriched curriculum that is fully aligned with requirements. The school has ensured that both support and extension activities are planned to extend opportunities for students, and that a focus on sport and the arts is maintained, which provides a good range of stimulating experiences for students. The principal has ensured that information derived from data analysis informs curriculum development and modification. Accurate understanding of the needs of the high proportion of English language learners and those for whom English is a second language has led to comprehension strands of English language arts being strengthened. This is having a positive impact on student learning, while the realignment of the literacy block with science is beginning to ensure improvements in the comprehension aspects of the scientific curriculum. Last year's successful implementation of the writers' workshop has led to the introduction of the workshop strategies in math. Students report that they are much more enthusiastic in this style of lesson, although data is not yet available to indicate its early impact.

Relationships between adults and students, and between the students themselves are warm and trusting. Students know that their teachers regard their learning as important and respond with concentration and good levels of motivation. While the majority of lessons make effective use of one or more strategies of differentiation in meeting the varying needs of students, this is not yet embedded. Part of the reason for this is that learning objectives are seldom precisely set, which means that teachers do not focus sufficiently on the activities to be undertaken by different groups in order to achieve those objectives. At the same time, the school acknowledges that discussion between teachers and students is often superficial, with emphasis generally being placed on securing a 'right' answer rather than probing students' knowledge and understanding.

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.

The school has developed a good quality professional development plan that draws information from a variety of sources including comparative data and accurate observations undertaken by the principal and assistant principals. Regular review of the

outcomes of these observations ensures that leaders consider the impact of improvement priorities in the Comprehensive Educational Plan when reviewing lessons. An additional strength of the process is in the identification of specific focus areas, usually drawn from published standards for teachers. Collaboration is an effective and developing feature of the school. School leaders work with teachers in regular collaborative planning meetings and intervisitations. Teachers are strongly motivated by opportunities to share successful strategies with colleagues. A strong sense of collegiality pervades the school, which has a positive impact on teachers' shared commitment and on the school's development. The inquiry team demonstrates a clear understanding of its role, benefits this year from continuity from last year's membership, and has a good understanding of data. Meetings make good use of a wide range of information, including data relating to students' social and emotional development; a particularly crucial consideration given the challenging circumstances of many of the families. In a move that has considerable potential, the work of the inquiry team is being spread this year into smaller class based inquiries, focusing on three students of below average, average and above average achievement. The school sensibly intends this research to serve as a focus for data discussions in grade meetings, as well as informing administrator discussions with teachers.

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.

In addition to meetings each marking period, the principal and assistant principals refer to specific data on student performance when reviewing the outcomes of class observations. In this way, they have developed an effective understanding, not only of teachers' strengths, development needs and progress, but also of the features of instruction that have the most positive impact on student learning. With good support from coaches and administrators, teachers review student progress towards their quarterly goals and make effective use of the information in adapting their planning. The school acknowledges that this is not sufficiently detailed to enable a precise evaluation of its effectiveness. and has begun to consider plans to support teachers in identifying planned modifications with greater clarity.

Through the review of student data and in-house assessments, alongside the outcomes of the school's well focused monitoring, school leaders have an accurate picture of the school's developing effectiveness. Because of this, their self evaluation is accurate and used with increasing confidence in modifying strategic planning. While the Comprehensive Educational Plan reflects the school's plans for improvement, the absence of staged actions, timescales and success criteria hampers leaders in understanding the progress that is being made towards achieving strategic change. Nonetheless, because of clear communications, backed up by the consistent focus of regular meetings and classroom observations, there is a good level of shared understanding of the school's vision among leaders, staff and parents.

School name: John J Driscoll Elementary School	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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, DYO, 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>	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.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	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.

<i>To what extent do...</i>	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
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