

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

The Douglaston School

Elementary School 098

**40-20 235 Street
Queens
NY 11363**

Principal: Sheila Huggins

Dates of review: December 3 – 4, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Anita E. Saunders

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Douglaston School is an elementary school with 272 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 8% Hispanic, 61% White, and 26% Asian students. The student body includes no English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 96%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Douglaston School is a safe, nurturing school with a very positive culture that strongly promotes excellence and a learning community focused on student outcomes. The beautiful displays of student work, especially writing, are excellent. The principal is a collaborative leader with a strong commitment to the academic, social, and emotional well-being of the students, and knows every child by name. As a result, students enjoy coming to school, are well behaved, and respectful of one another and adults. Teachers are dedicated and supportive of students, parents, the principal, and one another. These qualities enhance students' attitude to learning considerably. Parents are involved in the school, volunteering to work in the library, reading to classes on "Friendly Fridays", and engaged in decision-making through the school leadership team. However, parents are not informed on a regular basis of their individual child's short- and long-term goals, which impedes their ability to support their child's learning.

The principal and staff work cohesively, analyzing data to identify trends and areas of school-wide need and success. Teams of teachers consistently participate in professional collaborations, reflecting on their work and researching additional instructional strategies to promote student growth and achievement, especially for the level 3 and 4 students. Many teachers are effectively differentiating the curriculum and instruction. However, the school has not identified common assessments to track and evaluate student progress necessary for adjusting student goals and instructional plans during the year. Not all students are able to articulate their interim and long-term goals and the next steps necessary to achieve these goals. In addition, many students are unable to assess their own work and some do not know the basis for their grades on certain tasks. The school has no structures to regularly evaluate teaching practices or to monitor and measure interim goals and benchmarks for all plans pertaining to student and adult learning, so adjustments can be made, during the year and over time. These deficiencies impact negatively upon student achievement.

The school provides effective partnerships and collaborations. Students are enthusiastic about the ballroom dance program and are proud of their gold medal. Additionally, parents and students actively and successfully participate in several local science enrichment projects. Community service is strongly advocated and the school has established an Ambassador Team which has adopted a homeless shelter. Students collected and donated a huge amount of food for Thanksgiving. This project provides all students with a sense of caring for those less fortunate than themselves and a real life purpose for planning and decision-making, as well as writing and researching.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has developed an impressive safe, caring, respectful environment and a positive culture that strongly supports student academic, social, and emotional growth.
 - The principal knows every child by name and holds a daily ten minute gathering in the auditorium for all students and staff. Here she promotes important values, such as respect and caring for others illustrated by current events and the power of humor and laughter.
 - Students enjoy school. They walk the halls smiling and want to succeed. One second grader stated, “I love school, love it, love it!” Another student said he likes school because he even took a test to determine his learning style. Students readily participate in lessons and gain confidence by voicing their opinions in class discussions, as well as partner and group work. High quality student work is beautifully exhibited in halls and classrooms.
- Teachers benefit from participating in professional collaborations that foster reflection as well as providing options for researching effective instructional strategies that positively impact on student learning.
 - All teachers are engaged in teacher teams that meet weekly using an inquiry approach. Their analysis of data and formative assessments has identified targeted students and lead them to reflect upon their practice. Assuming leadership roles in researching and assigning one another informative articles and chapters of books to read is expanding all teachers’ knowledge and enhancing student learning.
 - All teacher teams are studying student work and reflecting upon the effectiveness of instruction, especially for higher level students. They share lessons and strategies to improve their teaching and have revised curricula maps and pacing calendars.
- The principal and all her staff work cohesively to gather and analyze data in order to guide the school forward with the expanding process of developing habits of data-driven, reflective planning.
 - Analysis of a range of summative assessments has accurately identified two issues. Level 3 and 4 students and former English language learners are not making adequate progress in English language arts and math. The lack of challenge for students beginning in kindergarten fails to accelerate their learning. Administration and staff have formulated a clear action plan to address these deficiencies.
 - Teachers use data to identify trends throughout the school and review the effectiveness of instructional and organizational decisions. The principal has requested network support specialists provide professional development for staff in reflective planning in order to build on the good work that has already been achieved.

- The principal has established a vision, supported by the whole school community, focused on accelerating adult and student learning.
 - The Comprehensive Educational Plan and the Principal's Performance Review list specific goals and action plans, which are reviewed several times a year. The school vision, posted in the entrance hall of the building, emphasizes the need "to meet standards of excellence. "
 - The principal's discussions with the entire school community about all available data lead to the formulation of clear goals and actions plans. One example is that of a teacher team, aware of deficiencies in part of the math curriculum, that is refining a unit on problem solving to improve higher level thinking in level 3 and 4 students.
- Effective partnerships and collaborations which complement outside support services provide students with a wide range of opportunities that impact on their social, emotional and academic growth.
 - The school has established a partnership with the American Ballroom Dance Theater for teaching ballroom dancing. Students love participating and have been successful in competition. Medori and Friends provides workshops for staff, students, and parents, teaching the connection of musical performance and genres to the classroom curriculum. Udall's Cove Preservation and Alley Pond Environmental Center provide excellent opportunities for enriching science learning.
 - The Ambassador Team is a community service project with a board of directors that consists of students and staff who meet regularly. It provides all students with an excellent chance to voice their opinions, demonstrating democratic decision making. Students have identified a homeless shelter for their on-going service, positively impacting upon their commitment to helping those in need. They are researching national projects using their computer knowledge to access the internet, as well as, their writing skills to draft letters for attaining information from various sources.
- The principal and staff consistently communicate high expectations to students and families, and actively engage parents in school decision-making, which results in a shared and strong commitment to the school.
 - With the help of a parent architect and in consultation with the principal and school leadership team, parents designed the new library media center and are funding "Studio in a School" to provide additional art education for the students.
 - Staff and parents plan and attend important school activities, fund raisers, and events. One such initiative, "Friendly Fridays," features parent volunteers reading to a class. The School Leadership Team meets regularly and is influential in putting forward ideas and in decision-making.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine goal-setting procedures to ensure that goals include precise short- and long-term measurable outcomes that make it possible to monitor students' progress effectively and to reinforce ownership and accountability.
 - Teacher teams and individual teachers do not use common assessments to track student achievement and adjust plans and goals for targeted individual students and student subgroups during the year.
 - The lack of a consistent structure for providing timely feedback on progress towards interim- and long-term goals to students and families does not ensure that they know how much progress students are making or understand the opportunities available for support or enrichment.
- Improve the consistency of communication and collaboration with students and their parents to help them track progress towards meeting specific interim benchmarks and long-term goals.
 - The school has not developed a system to help families use tools such as ARIS Parent Link in order to understand student performance. Moreover, parents do not know their child's interim goals or benchmarks.
 - Not all teachers help students to assess their own work and progress. Most teachers conference with students, but not all students are able to articulate what they need to do next in their learning. Not all teachers use rubrics for evaluating student work and some students and parents do not know the basis for the grade on certain tasks. One parent stated, "I did not know how my child was doing until three days before the report card when a few tests arrived at home."
- Design a uniform protocol for learning walks and observations to ensure that administration evaluates teaching practices and identifies next steps for individual teachers using common criteria.
 - Staff are unaware of specific instructional and curricular needs throughout the school and across grades. This is due to the absence of clear structures for leaders to regularly evaluate, adjust and improve curricular and instructional policies and practices across the school.
 - Due to the lack of evaluative procedures, staff do not know which resources are working and why, what is taught and how it is taught, or what additional capacity building practices are needed.
- Develop a collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim goals and benchmarks in all plans in order to evaluate student and adult learning, so that adjustments can be made during the year and overtime to raise achievement.
 - There is no system for monitoring and measuring interim goals and benchmarks or for identifying what improvements need to be made to plans or to strategies for professional development and collaborations, capacity building, alignment and coherence between what is taught and how it is taught, resources, and organizational decisions.

- A “Teacher Team Report” has recently been developed to evaluate the effectiveness of the team’s work with its targeted students. However, there is no school-wide system for measuring the impact of each team’s work to enable adjustments to be made in instruction, curriculum and organizational practices across the school.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Douglaston School	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?		X					
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X					
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X					
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		X					
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed