



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Samuel Mills Sprole**

**Public School 32**

**317 Hoyt Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11231**

**Principal: Ann Marie Lettieri-Baker**

**Dates of review: March 12 - 13, 2007**

**Reviewer: Mike Sutton**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Samuel Mills Spole is located in western Brooklyn and has 275 students enrolled from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. This number has fallen in recent years due to local demographic changes. Around 43% of the students are Hispanic, 37% Black, 16% White and 4% are from other ethnic groups. Of those enrolled, 85% are eligible for Title I funding. This is a little lower than for similar schools but higher than for City schools overall. Around 9% of the students are English language learners. The proportion of special education students has risen in recent years and is currently at 37%. The level of attendance is 91% which is in line with similar schools but a little lower than City schools overall.

The school has pioneered a program for the inclusion of students with high functioning autism. This program, known as the "New York City Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Program", services high functioning autistic children in half size Collaborative Team Teaching classes, or, "micro inclusion classes". These classes each consist of four children who are on the autistic spectrum combined with 6-8 typically developing children with two specially trained classroom teachers. The program is currently on grade levels kindergarten through grade four and will grow to grade five next school year.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school is very well led and managed by the principal and her cabinet.
- The students like school, feel safe and are well cared for.
- The integration of children with autism is exceptionally well planned and managed.
- The collection and analysis of a wide range of data gives the school clear information about its strengths and areas for development, which it uses well in planning for further improvements.
- The school assesses thoroughly and addresses well, the needs of those students who need extra help.
- The curriculum is well planned and includes regular art and music lessons.
- The school has a very good climate for learning in which teamwork is a strong and consistent feature.
- There is a strong culture of professional learning and development.
- There is a rigorous process for maintaining and improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- The school has clear aims and objectives, underpinned by a well-constructed development plan.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop the analysis and use of data to check for aspects of students' performance which may differ by gender.
- Continue to develop opportunities to challenge higher achieving students.
- Increase the opportunities for students to work independently for longer periods.
- Continue to improve the teaching of science and technology.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

The school has improved substantially in recent years under the astute leadership of the principal and her cabinet. The students make good progress and levels of achievement, as shown in mandatory tests, have risen steadily to match the standards seen in similar schools in English language arts. They are significantly better than this in mathematics and match those of City schools generally. Science has improved too, but not as quickly.

The school's successes lie in the good use it makes of the wide range of data which it collects to show students' progress. Careful analysis of this data enables the school to see where it is doing well and where it could do better. Precise targeting of additional support from the coaches for English and mathematics, the academic team and the grade team leaders enables teachers to address areas identified for attention and to develop their own thinking and pedagogic practice. The school has a very clear picture of how different grades, subjects and classes perform but does not analyze performance by gender as rigorously.

The needs of those students who find some aspects of learning more challenging, are very well met because their needs are quickly identified and intervention is prompt and coherently planned. A particularly strong feature of the school is the high quality program for children with autism. Small classes and well trained and well prepared teachers and assistants are the key to this success. These children are very well integrated into general education classes. The curriculum is well organized, with art and music fully included in the range of work for students. Professional development for the staff is threaded throughout the school's work. There is a continuous resolve to improve. Development plans identify exactly what needs to be addressed along with its goals for improvement.

A strong feature of the school's philosophy and approach is the small classes, together with collaborative teaching and well-planned group work for students. In their eagerness to help and support, the teachers do not always allow the students sufficient time to work on their own and use their skills of cooperation and independent study to the fullest.

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

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

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

The school consistently gathers a wide range of data from statutory assessments and from regular, periodic class-based assessments. These data provide teachers with a constantly updated stream of information about each student's progress in reading and mathematics. It also provides the cabinet and coaches with sets of data which are analyzed to show how different groups of students, grades and subjects are progressing. The numbers of students in most classes and grades is too small when analyzed by ethnicity to show patterns with any reliability. However, the school has a sufficient overview of this on a

school-wide basis to have reasonable confidence that different ethnic groups are doing equally well. The one area where it does not analyze its own data in sufficient depth is to look for any potential differences in performance between genders. Its analysis of annual statutory assessment data suggests that both genders do equally well but the school has sufficient data to check this aspect more thoroughly.

The school collects and uses data on other key groups to plan for improvement. These groups include those students on the borderline of the vital promotional boundary between level 2 and 3 in the mandatory tests. Although small in number, the progress of the English language learners is tracked just as carefully and there are good records kept of particular aspects of social development for the students with autism. The progress of special education students is followed carefully through classroom assessments and through specific targets in the individual educational plans.

The school has a clear view from its data of how well it is doing against similar and City schools. It has benchmarked its own performance as for example in getting attendance up to levels comparable to similar schools.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.**

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

The data which the school gathers and analyzes form a solid foundation for its improvement planning. For example, there are clear, quantified annual targets for improved performance in English language arts, mathematics and science. These have been broken down to precise targets for different grades. The students’ reading is reviewed and data collected and checked every month to ensure that classes and grades are on course. Assessments at the end of units in mathematics provide parallel information.

There are similar robust targets set collaboratively for many other aspects of the school’s work. These include targets for raising attendance levels at parent workshops and parent teacher association meetings, reductions in numbers of referrals for special education services and targets for teachers’ engagement in professional development. All are securely rooted in current levels of performance and are achievable yet sufficiently demanding.

The support to ensure improvement of special education students is a top priority and this aspect of the school’s work is extremely well managed. Students who may be struggling with parts of their learning are quickly identified through class-based assessment procedures and then referral is arranged to the intervention team. The work of this team is well coordinated to ensure that any additional work with the student which is provided away from the main classroom, matches the work being done by the rest of the class. The students with autism have specific targets related to their individual developmental needs. These are constantly monitored and reviewed by their support staff. As a result there is clear, substantive evidence of the positive difference the school makes for these students.

There is a relentless drive for improvement in students’ achievement and the school sets high expectations of staff and students. Specific targets are translated into short intense sessions of professional development for staff. The coaches for English and mathematics

steer these well, ensuring that teaching skills are constantly being refined and honed. Much of the focus is centered on improvements for those students considerably below or on the edge of achieving promotional grades. There is less robust targeting of the higher achieving students and this aspect of the school's work is not as well developed.

The school sees parents as vital partners in its improvement strategy. It arranges a good range of workshops and information evenings to supplement the standard parent-teacher conferences. It struggles to entice enough parents to these events in spite of very positive efforts from the parent coordinator.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

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

The school has planned its curriculum very carefully to weave the statutory elements with a broader range of subjects such as music and art. The work in these subjects contributes strongly to the bright and engaging appearance of the school. Good quality work that uses a range of artistic media is displayed throughout and the students enjoy their music lessons and the opportunities they have to perform, such as in the 'Celebration of Brazil'. The work in mathematics and English allows for regular assessments to provide information about progress. The coaches are constantly looking to refine ways of teaching or adjust certain aspects of the curriculum. For example, in mathematics there is a very positive drive to use more mathematical investigations to develop students' thinking and understanding.

The teachers know exactly what their responsibilities are. They plan thoroughly and work well in teams. They keep well organized binders of assessments which cover all social and academic aspects of students' development. They make constant use of these assessments when planning work to suit different student's needs or to re-arrange groups. The intervention staff and other support staff work well alongside students or in separate small groups where appropriate.

The quality of teaching as seen and as evidenced from school monitoring information, is good. The students settle readily to their work and enjoy what they do. However, at times teachers are too quick to step in and support students before they need it, particularly when students are working in groups. This reduces the opportunities for students to work independently on tasks for sustained periods and also tends to inhibit opportunities for them to work out practical solutions for themselves. In one situation observed, the students were engrossed in a cooperative practical task in science but needed more time to discuss and learn for themselves just how and what they needed to measure before further prompts from the staff.

The budget has been well used to ensure the school's policy of small teaching groups and classes. Scheduling has been thought through well and as a result there is a good balance of academic strengths across cooperative teaching teams and across grades. The hiring of teachers with specific skills in music and art has enhanced these subjects. Further good use has been made of scheduling to allow times for teachers to plan together and for coaches to have time to make important inputs where the assessment information warrants this.

The staff know their students extremely well and are alert to any signs of academic or social concern. The counseling service works very well in support of individuals and students say they feel safe, well cared for and always have someone they can turn to if they have a problem. Attendance levels are satisfactorily in line with similar schools. The school has clear well-followed procedures to keep a check on this and to follow up individual cases of concern.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

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

Teachers are hired on the basis of their commitment to ensuring the academic and social development of their students and abilities to work in line with the school's philosophy of small cooperative teaching units. They are also expected to be able to plan well and use a range of assessment tools. Skills in collecting and analyzing data are developing well at senior and middle levels of the school management teams and key leaders have a good understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to do better.

There is a strong ethic of continuous self improvement amongst the staff. The academic coaches and the lead teachers and the school's administrative cabinet are instrumental in providing short intensive sessions of professional development or one to one discussions with staff. The increased focus on improving opportunities for the students to investigate and discuss problems in mathematics is driven by the analysis of data. This analysis has revealed that more challenge needs to be provided to higher achieving students. Similarly, there is a focus in grade meetings ensuring that the teachers have a full understanding of the range of reading skills that students need in order to progress through the levels of reading books.

The principal has a very clear and accurate view of the quality of teaching in all areas of the school through frequent informal visits and from formal observations. Where improvements are identified as necessary, the right measures are taken to see that these happen. Innovative use is made of the latitude afforded to tenured teachers to engage in research into their own teaching methodology. The staff report that this is 'no easy option' and has made them think closely about how to improve aspects of their teaching.

The various teams work together very well. There is close cooperation in planning between paired teachers, in arranging visits to each other's classrooms and in liaison with the support intervention or counseling staff. There is a strong culture of openness and improvement through sharing of experiences and information.

The principal is widely respected and, on the evidence of how far the school has come in recent years, has undoubted capacity to bring about further improvements. The school runs very smoothly day-to-day because office routines are well organized and communication systems are implemented well.

The school makes excellent use of outside organizations to support its work. Particularly effective has been the work with Hunter College and New York University as part of the program for inclusion of students with autism. Very good use is made of the Good Shepard Services for after school programs. Other organizations are used well to support the parent coordinator in arranging workshops for parents.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

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

The school is well led and managed and increasingly effective in its work. This is because it has set its sights much higher for students' achievements and has good systems to check how well it is doing in this.

The school has an accurate picture of how well it does in different aspects of its work because it is constantly using its wide range of data as a yardstick by which to gauge improvement. The improvements have been focused in the right places and it knows where more work is needed and new challenges are emerging. It has sufficiently flexible systems to respond to these in a coherent fashion.

There are excellent development plans covering all aspects of the school's work. They are clearly based on an accurate understanding of current achievement levels and set out realistic targets for improvement. These are principally aimed at academic improvement but also take good account of other aspects of its work, such as developing personal and social skills, working with parents and enhancing the curriculum and professional development. A significant number of these targets have already been achieved this school year.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Samuel Mills Sprole (PS 32)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		<b>X</b>	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		<b>X</b>	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			<b>X</b>
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		<b>X</b>	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X