



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Osmond A. Church

Public School 124

**129-15 150th Avenue
Queens
NY 11420**

Principal: Valarie L. Lewis

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Reviewer: Thomas J. Clark

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Osmond A Church School is a large elementary school with 1,064 students enrolled. Over the past three years the school has added grades 6, 7 and 8, which has resulted in the school being overcrowded. The school has a diverse student population with 40% Black/African American, 33% Asian, 23% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Native American. These proportions of Black and Asian students are significantly greater than those in similar schools, while that of White students significantly lower. The school has very few special education (2%) and English language learners (3%) students for a school of its size, with these numbers of students being far fewer than those in similar schools. The school is Title 1 eligible for 70% of its students; this is substantially higher than in similar schools. Student attendance is good and approximates both similar schools and City-wide.

Osmond Church has been a Core Knowledge School since 1999 when it was awarded a three-year Comprehensive Reform Model grant. When the grant expired, the school sustained the program with its Title 1 funds. The Core Knowledge program includes interdisciplinary content instruction in literacy, science, social studies, music and visual arts. In 2005 the school gained National Core Knowledge status and became an official visitation site for schools across the city and country.

All of the school's subgroups have met the New York State criteria for making adequate yearly progress for the past four years, so that the school has been continuously categorized "in good standing". Moreover, the school has been recognized by the New York State Department of Education as a high performing/achievement gap-closing school for the past three years, due to the substantial progress made by all of the school's subgroups on the State assessments.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides exceptional leadership, ensuring that the educational and personal needs of every child are met.
- The administrators and teachers have deep knowledge of every child in the school.
- The school's resources are allocated very effectively to ensure that the staff has the professional development and instructional supports needed to have the students succeed.
- School plans are reviewed continuously and revised when the evidence suggests it is necessary.
- The school provides extensive supplementary enrichment and remediation opportunities for all students.
- The school celebrates and embraces the cultural diversity of its student body.
- Staff scheduling is used effectively to provide push-in/pull-out supports for students not making adequate progress.
- At-risk students are identified and provided with intensive support beginning in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, resulting in few special education referrals through the grades.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue outreach to parents to increase their participation.
- Ensure that the students have a voice in school planning.
- Continue to explore ways of having students become more proficient at self-evaluation of their educational progress.
- Establish more specific individual student goals to facilitate tracking student growth.
- Continue professional development to augment teacher skills in differentiating instruction based on individual student need.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

Osmond A. Church School is a large elementary school housing grades pre-kindergarten through eighth grade for the first time. Although overcrowded, the school is extremely orderly and welcoming. The principal “seems to be everywhere” as one teacher put it, providing a model of hard work and high expectations which influences the whole school. The principal and staff know the educational and personal needs of every child in the school. This results in immediate support for students not making adequate progress academically or experiencing personal difficulties. The school has invested in a myriad of instructional supports in order to differentiate instruction to meet every child’s needs.

An enormous quantity and variety of data are used effectively to plan and to track student progress. All members of the school community share in the process. Grade lists of student results from the City and State assessments are organized by class to be more useful in planning instruction. Student writing and conference notes are major sources of data for on-going tracking of student progress by teachers and administrators. Professional development is data driven, effectively addressing the needs of each teacher.

Core Knowledge provides the curricular and instructional framework for the school. The program has been artfully adapted to enable the school to meet the New York academic standards and all assessment criteria, so as to be identified as a school “in good standing” for the past four years. The close attention paid to the needs of each of the many groups of students in the school has also resulted in its identification by the state as a high performing/achievement gap closing school.

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 uses both formal and informal data effectively to create constantly updated pictures of the performance of each student, class and grade. The principal maintains well-organized binders with data on individual students, with group, class and grade summaries, which enable her to track progress at all levels. The administrators also review extensive student-data binders maintained by every teacher during monthly teacher conferences. With the binders teachers track the progress of each student toward specific goals on multiple indicators. In addition, each teacher submits monthly writing samples for every student, which are evaluated by the administrators and returned with a writing report for each student sample. Teachers view these writing reports as one of the many forms of effective professional development provided for them.

The instructional team constantly evaluates the assessments used, and when necessary purchases new instruments. It was found that mandated assessments for the primary grades lacked articulation with the standards, and lacked continuity across grades. As a

result the school decided to provide a more reliable assessment that would allow the teachers and administrators to continuously track student progress in reading by purchasing 'DIBELS' for kindergarten through grade three. Using Palm hand-held computers teachers evaluate students three times per year on a series of reading skills. Each student is judged according to progress made on specific grade level standards. Another system, work sampling, was implemented in pre-school to track progress early on, providing a basis for planning by the kindergarten teachers the following year.

The principal and vice principal compare the progress of the school, grade by grade, and class by class during monthly grade conferences and individual teacher conferences. Special attention is paid to charting the progress of each of the many groups that make up the school's diverse student body.

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.

School goals and associated action plans are collaboratively developed by the school's leadership team, which is made up of the administrators, teachers and parent representatives. All teachers review the plan and make input during teacher conferences. The school has a "living" five-year plan with Core Knowledge as the focus. Progress towards attainment of each goal and implementation of each action plan is charted and reviewed monthly.

Goals are set for each student and groups of students, with progress tracked in data binders, and in the student portfolio and writing folders. The progress of each student is checked by the administrators during monthly teacher conferences. Some teachers are still learning to set goals specific enough to track student progress efficiently. Students in grades two through eight also track their own progress, using SRA self-evaluation progress assessments. Peer assessment, currently used in some classes, will be expanded in the coming year. Special attention is paid to students held over or in danger of being held over, and students identified as needing extra support by the academic intervention team. English language learners who pass the language proficiency exam is another group carefully monitored by the school because, although they no longer qualify for special services, these students frequently lack the vocabulary and comprehension skills necessary to perform at grade level. Students receiving special education services are regularly evaluated, with many eventually returned to regular instruction.

The administrators and teachers have extremely high expectations for all students. This is manifest in the relationships established by the staff with every student. Frequent communication with parents, "a two way street" according to one parent, fosters a home and school partnership in the education of these students. The partnership is strengthened by the weekly Friday folders sent home with a note on student progress and suggestions for how the student can be further supported at home. Parents are regularly consulted by the school regarding the education of their children, and the parent coordinator facilitates this. Multiple opportunities for parent input are provided, including Saturday meetings, providing information on what their children are learning and how they are assessed. The school works hard to increase parent and student participation in school planning that is not always at desired levels.

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 Core Knowledge program provides the school with a framework aligned with the standards. The Core curriculum is more sequentially structured than the standards, according to the staff, with interim benchmarks to measure student progress. Pacing calendars set specific expectations for progress through the curriculum during the year and are used by the administrators to hold teachers accountable during monthly teacher conferences. There is a “culture of accountability” among the teachers, as one teacher put it. The teachers are extremely knowledgeable about all of their students and hold themselves accountable for student progress. There is an expressed sense of both friendly competition and collaboration among the teachers to do what’s best for students. Teachers collaborate frequently and regularly share effective practices to differentiate instruction.

Resources are very effectively allocated to support the school’s academic program. When data reveal a need for additional support, new programs are purchased with in-school professional development. For example, when it was determined that additional phonics instruction was needed for at-risk students, the Leapfrog program was purchased, and had immediate impact on the targeted students. “You only have to ask” to get needed instructional materials for classrooms, one teacher said. The school budgets substantial per-session funds to provide supplementary instruction needed by the students. Science, Spanish, technology, art and music teachers are hired to provide instruction during prep periods. Support staff are scheduled for push-in and pull-out sessions with students, based on individual student need. Late buses are contracted by the school to allow bused students to participate in after-school activities.

As a result of the high quality of instruction and the high expectations of the staff for all students, virtually all students are actively engaged in learning. Student attendance is high and is constantly monitored by staff. When students are absent, calls home are made, and if a student is out for several days, work is sent home by the teacher.

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.

The principal employs extremely professional staff who have a good understanding of how to use data effectively. Recruitment is done through an aggressive recruitment campaign in teacher hiring halls and fellows programs, as well as from referrals by colleagues and university recommendations. Rigorous criteria are applied during initial interviews, with potential candidates invited to visit the school with additional evidence of their qualifications, including a model lesson. When possible, the principal visits the school of prospective teachers.

Professional development is on-going and based on student data, as well as teacher requests and needs determined during administrator class visits. New programs purchased by the school always include in-school professional development, with follow

up. New teachers find the Core Knowledge and Kaplan coordinator on-site support especially helpful. Teachers new to Core Knowledge are sent to the program's summer institute, and are supported to attend professional conferences and external professional development. The knowledge and skills teachers have learned are shared with others during common prep, after school and lunchtime collaborative planning sessions. The school has identified differentiation of instruction as a priority area for professional development to continuously up-grade instructional practice.

The principal and assistant principal regularly visit all classrooms. Teachers are given a binder at the beginning of each year spelling out what the administrators expect to see in each classroom. The teachers find the written feedback "always constructive and supportive" and often providing observations regarding individual students. When expectations are not fully met, follow-up conferences and observations are made to ensure the teachers' needs are met. The staff regularly share expertise, often visiting each other's classes "to see how it's done". School planning and tracking of student progress occurs in teams, both on school-wide committees and in grade group meetings.

The principal is highly regarded by all members of the school community. In the teachers' eyes she 'strives for excellence", and "works so hard, so must we". Parents are constantly impressed with her knowledge of every child in the school. As result of the principal's leadership and support by the staff and parents, the school runs exceptionally well. The school partners with a number of external agencies for youth development and support services, including the Human Rights Commission, and the Boys and Girls Club.

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's plan and focused student interventions are monitored continuously as administrators and support staff visit classrooms and conference with teachers. Specific long-term and short-term benchmarks facilitate monitoring implementation of the plan, which was revised four times this year as data indicated the need to do so. The administrators and teachers compare student progress on multiple indicators of achievement, both within and between groups of students, classes and grades. Such comparisons revealed the need to revise plans to support English language learners when it was discovered that students who passed the English proficiency exam needed to build their vocabulary and inferencing skills in order to be successful on the City and State assessments. The academic intervention team meets weekly to track the progress of students referred as needing additional support. Students not making progress, as measured by the embedded curriculum assessments, or the multiple diagnostic assessments are re-evaluated and given alternate interventions.

The school's five-year plan is viewed as a living document by the administration, teachers and parents. The plan defines a multi-year working framework for the school to address the needs of all students and to track their progress. Collaboration by all components of the school community in developing the plan, monitoring its impact, and revising the goals and action plans as the school progresses, ensure alignment of practices and resources needed for continuous improvement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Osmond A. Church (PS 124)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

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.	∅	✓	+
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"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
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"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
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"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
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.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* 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.

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.	∅	✓	+
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.			X
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.			X
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
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.			X
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.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

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.	∅	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
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.	∅	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
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.	∅	✓	+
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
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X