



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Public School 233

**109-36 204th Street
Queens
NY 11412**

Principal: Debbie Edmonds

Dates of review: March 26 - 28, 2007

Reviewer: Ronnie Solow

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

Public School 233 Queens is a District 75 school serving students on seven sites throughout Queens. The school educates students that are designated as having autism, severe multiple disabilities and emotional difficulties. All students are mandated for a twelve month school year. There are currently 360 students of which 41.27% are Black, 27.70% are Hispanic, 17.72% are White and 13.28% Asian and others. In grades 3 through 8, 15% of the students are English language learners. In grades 9 through 12, 17.5% of the students are English language learners. There is one high school bilingual Spanish class serving students in accordance with their individual education plan mandates. This year a site at the new High School for Construction Trades, Engineering and Architecture was initiated.

The individual education plan generates the related services every student receives. Many students have individual paraprofessionals assigned to assist them with health or behavioral needs. Most students are classified as alternate assessment. Data folios prepared for the targeted age groups in this category, as mandated by the State, are assessed for accuracy and independence of task accomplishment.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is highly visible and knows her students well.
- The administrative team works collaboratively and cooperatively.
- Parents and staff appreciate the openness and accessibility of the administration.
- Students are treated with respect and encouraged to reach their individual potential.
- The budget is directed towards increasing student services.
- Professional development is based on staff needs and skill level.
- Students are well known to administration and staff across classes, cohorts, and sites.
- The staff has formed a professional, collaborative community that supports one another in their growth and development.
- Youth development activities are aligned to support the classroom.
- Individual student data is continuously monitored to determine the need for change in services.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the system for data collection across all sites.
- Expand staff knowledge regarding the development of individual student portfolios.
- Develop opportunities for senior staff to share knowledge, skills and expertise as an alternative to formal observation.
- Continue to develop strategies to increase high school parents' involvement in the school life of their children.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The team approach to educating students is evident throughout the school. The principal, assistant principals, teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers work with parents to help each student reach their individual potential. Students are served in 12:1:1, 12:1:4, 6:1:1 classes. All but 18 students have alternate assessment and 63 students are included in inclusion programs. Classrooms reflect structure and practices designed for students with profound developmental disabilities.

In addition to individual paraprofessionals working with students on behavior, health or assistive needs, there are related service providers in the areas of occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech and language development. Some students have assistive technology devices to improve their functional capabilities. The principal and her cabinet have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

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 proficient.

The school uses data effectively to make decisions regarding individual students, cohorts, curriculum, programs and behavioral modification plans. The principal and administrative team regularly assesses a good range of attendance, behavioral and assessment data gathered on students. Teachers use Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-Handicapped Children methodologies to capture data on the students in their class. All students have individual portfolios that demonstrate mastery of individual education plan goals and objectives. Photographs often serve as the substantiating data.

The school examines data for cohorts of students including 12:1:1 classes, 12:1:4 classes, and 6:1:1 classes. Student data for the 8:1 inclusion program is examined on individual students to find out how well they are doing. Data is gathered effectively to check how well English language learners are doing throughout the school. Data for verbal and non-verbal students is examined to monitor their progress. Innovative use is made of data to shape male and female activities to support students in developing important functional skills for daily living. Classes are largely non-graded but loosely grouped according to the chronological age of the students. Grade level data is examined for progress across age groups, classrooms and for personal growth and development. Additional data is reviewed for progress students make with independent toileting and to move as many as possible to a less restrictive environment.

Principals of District 75 schools with similar populations meet regularly to discuss pertinent issues. No comparisons between schools are made given the need to highly individualize the program for every student at the school. The New York State alternate assessment data folios, used to assess student ability on State standards in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies are examined. In 2005-2006 about 138 data

folios were submitted and earned grades of level 3 and 4. This year, approximately the same number will be submitted in the required areas for the target age group population.

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 proficient.

The individual education plan and the classroom assessments are used appropriately to determine goals and objectives that are established for every student. Once each month, the administrative team reviews classroom data to assess progress of the students. A meeting with the teacher, paraprofessionals, related service providers, parent/caregiver, and students where able, determines the goals for every student.

Teachers are encouraged to speak with each other about particular student needs, but this practice is not consistently applied throughout the school. An end of year profile travels with the student to a new teacher or school site. Students who exhibit problematic behavioral needs are referred to the behavior management specialist/ crisis interventionist. A behavioral data form is completed, motivational assessment done and a behavior management plan is created. The efficacy of the plan is reviewed in 4-6 weeks and adjustments or other interventions can be incorporated if warranted.

Parents of non-verbal students receive daily communication from the school via the communication notebook. Communication between parents and teachers is good. Parents are invited to attend workshops designed for their specific needs. This good practice is exemplified in the invitations to come to good workshops on creating a communication system and quality feeding therapy. In addition there are individual education plan conferences, open school meetings, report card conferences, parent association meetings. The principal is continuing to develop strategies designed to further increase parental involvement especially at the high school level. High expectations are communicated to parents at all meetings and in newsletters, telephone calls and other home contacts. Students are encouraged to reach their full potential.

All students are assessed for individual growth and progress. Best practices for children with profound developmental disabilities or autism are employed in the classrooms. Staff are trained in the use of the picture exchange communication system and the use of electronic aids to support students in communicating effective choices.

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 proficient.

Teachers design their lessons around the District 75 theme of the month. All lessons are differentiated according to student need and functional ability. The Star Reporter literacy program and the Functional Academic Curriculum for Exceptional Students (FACES) serve as the basis for the literacy and mathematics instruction at the school. An interdisciplinary approach to the school curriculum ties the monthly theme to the other subject areas. The assistant principal at the site monitors the appropriateness of the lessons based on

functional levels and age appropriateness of the planned activities. Teacher accountability is assessed through the culminating activities and projects.

Best practices are shared and demonstrated by skilled staff members for new teachers. Teachers adapt age-appropriate materials using picture exchange communication well. Mayer Johnson symbols, photographs, or actual objects are incorporated according to student needs and used to increase and encourage communication ability in non-verbal students. The use of technology and other assistive devices are infused into the lessons resulting in increased student engagement and active learning. Budget and scheduling decisions are driven by the diverse needs of the students. Each assistant principal oversees particular sites. A coach and behavior management specialist serves all seven sites. Related service providers, health management, crisis and bus paraprofessionals provide additional direct services for students. These services benefit students significantly.

Structure, routines and regulations are high priorities for students with challenging behaviors. Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-Handicapped Children strategies are employed along with the best practices for students with profound developmental disabilities. The Power of Positive Choice program assists students to make positive decisions and generalize them to their daily lives. Good choices earn points and participation in clubs and other desirable activities sponsored by the school and District 75. The program has substantially reduced aggressive behaviors and the need for many crisis interventions. Fifteen staff members are also trained in Life Space Crisis Intervention and can diffuse a situation before it escalates into a crisis.

Attendance is a high priority. Travel-trained students should be in class by 9 A.M. A phone call is immediately made if they are not present at the required time. At all sites, there is a responsible party for making absence phone calls on the first day. Each Friday, the attendance committee reviews the attendance for all students. The attendance teacher, guidance counselor and assistant principals track all absences. Awards, certificates and Power of Positive Choice points are awarded for good attendance. Due to medical fragility and busing problems some absences cannot be helped. However, attendance is higher than other District 75 schools.

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 and assistant principal review the resumes of prospective staff. Potential candidates are asked to teach a demonstration lesson at the site they would be assigned. Senior staff and the coach, as well as the assistant principals, provide intensive assistance for new teachers. Teachers are assigned to classes or sites based on their particular skills working with specific groups of students. Lesson observations by the principal and assistant principals' take place daily through learning walks and formal observation procedures. Inter-visitations to observe good practice are scheduled within the building and to other sites. Teachers are encouraged to assist one another in informal exchanges. Teams of teachers and administrators review plans and make appropriate adjustments.

All staff members receive a questionnaire regarding professional development. The latest questionnaire revealed the need to systematize data collection across all sites and the

need for professional development on the student portfolios. The principal has begun to address these needs and will continue to provide assistance for staff in the coming year. There is an extensive calendar of professional development activities based on data about students' needs. The school and District 75 coaches are utilized to provide assistance for individual teachers based on expressed and observed needs.

Partnerships with external groups are an integral part of the school program. The transition coordinator and guidance counselor work with many agencies to provide suitable placements for students who will age-out of school. Activities of daily living and other functional life skills are practiced at job sites such as nursing homes and fast food restaurants. These work-study opportunities provide a real world focus on self-help, independence and daily living. Students unable to leave the building are provided work-study opportunities within the school site. Students are also encouraged to participate in service learning through activities such as Pennies for Patients and disaster relief activities. Two high school students serve on the District 75 student council. The school is a quiet learning environment that runs efficiently and smoothly across sites.

The principal is highly respected by staff and parents. She is praised for her ability, open door policy, inter-personal skills and willingness to participate in the requirements of the job. Parents and staff describe her as a warm, encouraging, and caring educator.

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 proficient.

The ability to set goals, monitor and revise them is demonstrated effectively throughout the school. The Comprehensive Education Plan is examined goal by goal at the monthly school leadership team meeting. Immediate revisions and mid-course corrections are enacted when they are determined to be necessary. The attendance plan, behavior modification plans, and individual education plans are examined by the administrative team to assess their effectiveness. Revisions are swift and immediate when necessary.

The assistant principals meet with teachers on a regular schedule to review individual education plans, lessons and behavior plans. Immediate modifications to academic services can be implemented when warranted. On a weekly basis, the principal follows up with the assistant principals to strategize and plan for each of the seven sites. She visits each on a regular schedule. At other times, she keeps in contact through e-mail and telephone. Data serves as the benchmark for every student, class, and grade, as well as for the goals and objectives in the Comprehensive Education Plan, the principal's goals and objectives and the ensuing goals set forth by the assistant principals. The school leadership team works to make the Comprehensive Education Plan a useful tool for school improvement. Staff is made aware of any revisions or where improvements are necessary.

Students with multiple and complex learning difficulties have great needs. In order to meet these needs, constant monitoring and revisions of plans, programs, and services are necessary. While evidence is difficult to capture in formalized data, anecdotal records and photographs serve as evaluative measures that indicate student growth and good progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 233 Queens	∅	✓	+
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	