



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Robert Fulton School

Elementary School 008

**37 Hicks Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal: Seth Phillips

Dates of review: January 14 - 15, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Roy Storrs

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Robert Fulton School is an elementary school with 486 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 38% Black, 11% Hispanic, 44% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 3% 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 2006-2007 was 93.5%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Parents, staff and students trust and respect the principal and share his vision of educating the whole child.
- The systematic collection of data provides leaders and faculty with a clear understanding of the performance and progress of its students.
- The principal is rigorous in comparing the school's performance against similar schools.
- Improved systems for identifying concerns and providing intervention for students with specific need are becoming increasingly effective.
- The curriculum places strong emphasis upon language acquisition and competency in math.
- Plentiful enrichment programs and links with external agencies enliven the curriculum and help nurture students' particular gifts and talents.
- The collegial staff, the atmosphere of trust, and effective procedures ensure a safe and inclusive environment, in which students enjoy learning.
- The school's high expectations are known to students and parents, who support them wholeheartedly.
- Parents are actively involved in the life of the school and provide an impressive level of support as partners in their children's learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide further training for the enthusiastic, but relatively inexperienced, staff in the use of data to improve planning and goal-setting.
- Ensure lessons are planned to meet the needs of all students, especially in challenging and extending the highest-achieving students.
- Ensure that the monitoring of student outcomes takes account of interim goals and appropriate time frames, and is coordinated systematically.
- Modify whole school goals in the light of periodic review to ensure they remain focused on the most pressing priorities for improvement.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

This school continues its impressive transformation from a school which was failing its students to one which is vibrant, popular with parents and growing in number. The principal's personal passion and commitment mean that his vision for the school is shared by students, faculty and parents alike. There is now a strong administration, whose strengths complement one another well. Together, they have successfully overseen this improvement. While placing due emphasis upon students' attainments in literacy and math, many enrichment activities engage students' interest and encourage their natural talents to flourish.

The collection and use of data is evident throughout the school and is especially effective in the younger grades. Senior staff work well together and provide strong support for the high proportion of enthusiastic, but relatively inexperienced, teachers, who require further training in the use of data. The school shows concern for the welfare of all its students. It has made distinct improvements in providing for those with particular needs, but does not always challenge the highest achievers. The collegial nature of the staff ensures students enjoy learning in a mutually respectful and trusting environment. Well-established procedures help the school to run smoothly as a harmonious learning community. Relationships across the whole school are further strengthened by the impressive commitment and support of parents, who provide valuable information about their children and become active partners in their learning.

Staff collaborate together well in setting goals for student outcomes based on data. The measurement of progress against these is not always systematic or consistent, with more effective practice in the younger classes. Senior leaders have clear aims for school improvement, but do not always modify these sufficiently based on careful analysis of progress towards interim goals. Most issues raised in the previous report have been addressed well. Assessment data is used more effectively, pupil support has improved and leadership responsibilities have been delegated. The inquiry team made a slow start due to the principal's absence to have an operation, but its composition has been determined, and its target group of 18 grade 3 and 4 students performing at Level 2 has been identified.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal's belief that assessment drives instruction underpins the school's thorough data-gathering procedures. Teachers use the data they have gathered, together with their perceptive observations, to provide the school with a substantial picture of every student's performance and progress. The process is especially strong in the younger classes where teachers' records of individual students are meticulous. Improved systems for identifying concerns, which involve teachers and the guidance counselor, are becoming increasingly effective in providing appropriate programs for students with specific needs. As a consequence, detailed information about English language learners and special education students ensures they receive appropriate and timely support. Well-planned intervention programs and successful collaborative team-teaching classes make valid contributions to these students' progress. The school is alert to ethnic and gender differences and the assistant principal analyzes data to reveal any differences in performance.

The principal keeps a close eye on the school's year-on-year progress and takes steps to remedy any concerns, such as a slight dip in the performance of grade 4 students last year. He has also been assiduous in looking to compare the school with other similar schools. He has formed a close and productive working relationship with the principal of one school whose educational philosophy matches his own, which has been especially valuable and benefited both leaders. Most teachers have had training in the use of data, but the principal appreciates the need to provide further training for the enthusiastic, but relatively inexperienced, newly-appointed staff.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

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

The principal, assistant principal and cabinet form a strong leadership team, with skills that complement one another. They set priorities and time frames, and support initiatives to help faculty meet its goals. Scheduled common preparation periods facilitate weekly planning meetings of the grade-level teachers. The principal's and staff developers' support of these meetings epitomizes the close collaboration between teachers and administration, which is both valued and productive. In these meetings, staff make curricular decisions, plan and set goals and consider students' social and emotional issues in order to help improve their academic progress. Detailed analysis of the lowest-attaining students has led to them attending intervention classes. Very effective support from two cluster teachers, working with small groups in classrooms, has led to improved student performance. The principal gives a clear message about educating the whole child and having high aspirations for all students, which parents support. The school's expectations are advertised in numerous ways, including each classroom teacher sending home attractively-produced newsletters explaining in considerable detail what the students will be studying.

There is an impressive relationship between parents and the school. The parents association's contribution involves the organization of numerous well-attended meetings, workshops and fund-raising activities. These strengthen bonds across the whole school community, which are further enhanced by the conscientious parent coordinator. Parents value their close relationship with the principal and most see themselves as equal partners with the teachers in their children's education. As a consequence, teachers and parents exchange information regularly via formal reports and in a variety of informal ways, including email conversations, to resolve any concerns about a particular student.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school covers the mandated curriculum well. It places strong emphasis upon language acquisition and competency in math, and records data on student attainment and progress diligently. Beyond that, numerous enrichment programs help nurture students’ particular gifts and talents. If students excel in one area, the principal believes this will give them greater confidence in areas they find more challenging. These programs are woven into the school day to give students a cohesive learning experience. One excellent example is a teaching artist from the Guggenheim Museum working with a grade 3 teacher and students who are studying Manhattan. Inspired by a collage seen at the museum, they visited and sketched famous landmarks, made trial collages; then in groups made large, vibrant finished pieces.

The principal’s skill in hiring staff and his creative management of the budget and schedules to facilitate joint planning and curriculum enrichment, reflect his desire to give students the best education possible. There is a strong atmosphere of trust and mutual support among the collegial staff, extending to their very close relationship with students. The positive and productive atmosphere evident throughout the school is promoted further by the orderliness of the classrooms and the site manager’s pride in having a clean and attractive school. Many teachers achieve their aim of making their lessons lively and interesting, so that students are engaged and attend regularly. Effective, differentiated instruction is deeply embedded in the younger classes where teachers’ meticulous planning and assessments enable them to match work to students’ levels of attainment. In other classrooms, work does not always meet the needs of all its students, especially the highest achievers, who are not sufficiently challenged or extended.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

Teachers expect to be observed and value the principal’s incisive, constructive and respectful feedback letters. Joint walkthroughs with the assistant principal, who also acts as the math staff developer, help the two of them gain shared perceptions as leaders. The principal makes it clear that he expects every teacher to improve over the course of a year. So, with a relatively young and inexperienced faculty, there is a strong commitment to staff professional development. Faculty workshops have addressed important whole-school issues such as improving discipline and students’ speaking and writing skills. In addition, professional development decisions address appropriately weaknesses revealed during observations. The collegial atmosphere encourages inter-visitations, which the teachers find invaluable in improving their practice. Intensive support is directed at the high proportion of teachers who are new to the school. After the principal’s informative introductory clinic, staff developers provide necessary support by working alongside new teachers.

The after-school intervention program, residential camps and enrichment classes, do much to help students grow academically and socially. The appointment of a full-time guidance counselor, who is a key player in the pupil personnel committee, has made a

distinct difference to students in need of support. One male teacher has had a significant impact upon the progress of upper-grade boys, who display emotional and behavioral problems. One successful feature has been the establishment of a Sunday program involving high school students acting as mentors to these boys as part of a leadership course.

For all students, effective procedures ensure the school provides an inclusive smooth-running environment, in which they enjoy learning. The principal plays a central role here through his availability to students, who say he is “a really good man” and “the base of this school”. Extensive and productive links with a wide variety of external groups provide additional enrichment in activities such as art, music, puppetry, book-making and circus arts.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The principal’s clearly defined goals are appropriately based upon the last Quality Review, his aim to educate the whole child and his high aspirations for the school. In addition, each teacher sets personal goals for their class, which they check regularly to assess progress. Individuals and groups of teachers conscientiously undertake periodic assessments and use the resulting information to track students’ progress and revise their plans, if necessary. These procedures are especially well established and beneficial in the younger classes where teachers maintain meticulous records of students’ attainment and other useful data. Regular observations, focused walkthroughs and discussions with staff developers and teachers, ensure the principal and assistant principal maintain a constant overview of the school’s performance against its stated goals. While the various forms of monitoring are effective in themselves, these are not always coordinated and cohesive and thus lose some impact in focusing on key priorities. Nevertheless, the leaders’ knowledge and understanding enable them to move the school forward, in consultation with other senior staff. The strong and harmonious relationship with parents ensures all members of the school community share and support the principal’s vision and the on-going development of this popular school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Robert Fulton School (K008)	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			X		

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X		

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?			X		
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X		

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X		

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped