



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Paerdergat School**

**Public School 251**

**1037 East 54th Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11234**

**Principal: Steven Boyer**

**Dates of review: September 25 – 27, 2006**

**Reviewer: Jacqueline Pentlow**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Paerdegat School (PS 251) is an elementary school with 668 students from pre-kindergarten to grade 5. The majority of students, 85%, come from a Black heritage. Ten percent of students are Hispanic and although most of these are fluent in English a few are still English language learners. 75% of students are eligible for Title 1 funding. 12% are special education students. Attendance is at a similar level to other New York City Department of Education schools.

Over the last three years the school has moved from being one using a traditional form of teaching and learning to one that engages the students in far more active learning methods. The impact of these initiatives has been to help focus the staff in terms of curriculum and instruction.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has a bright welcoming atmosphere that encourages learning.
- There are clear expectations of the students in behavior and academic terms.
- The school knows the individual students well.
- Standards of attainment are steadily rising.
- The restructured day is giving support to the students at the most effective time.
- Staff development is having a positive impact in the classroom.
- Involvement in projects such as the writing workshop has added a new dimension to the school curriculum.
- Staff are supportive of each other in a developmental way by sharing examples of successful practice and giving each other supportive advice.
- Staff are keen to work as a unified group for the good of the students.
- All levels of staff are involved in the annual reviews and development planning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Implement strategies to raise attainment levels in English language arts to match those in mathematics.
- Develop the school's use of data in setting goals and targets for students.
- Develop strategies for using assessment data more closely to differentiate work to plan the next steps in instruction and intervention for students in detail.
- Increase the consistency of instruction to enable the best practice of active learning and data use to become the norm.
- Involve staff more in decision-making to increase the consistent implementation of school policies.
- Continue to increase parental involvement in students' learning.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The Paerdergat School is a well developed school that has changed dramatically in the last three years. It has changed from a school following a very traditional curriculum and where parents were rarely involved in school life to one following dynamic active learning programs and where parents are welcome at any time. Many parents now work as volunteers in the school and are given suitable training for the task. The school leaders are focused on student learning and as a result standards are rising steadily. Students resolving conflict through a physical response means that historically the level of suspensions has been much higher than in similar schools. Effective procedures have dramatically reduced that number, so that they are now at a much lower level and incidents rarely happen in the classroom.

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

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

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

The school uses data from a variety of sources to establish how well students are performing. Students are assessed regularly using a variety of commercially produced tests as well as the school's own formal tests and ongoing scoring of work. These results are monitored and analyzed by the coaches so that remedial action can be taken if specific areas of weakness are identified. The coaches undertake an analysis of the answers to the questions, even if this is not provided routinely by the tests themselves, and are therefore able to provide suitable corrective and supplementary help to the students.

Scores in external tests in all grades have shown a steady increase over the last few years. The students' performance in mathematics is better than that in English language arts. The school was aware of the need to improve these results and has introduced a new curriculum plan and provided suitable professional support to ensure its success. The district has recognized the value of this approach and offered it to other schools.

The school uses comparisons over a long period of time and routinely compares them with similar schools. Tracking the levels of attainment of a particular cohort from one year to the next also shows the improvement made by the students. The school carefully looks at the analysis of the data of different groups and this shows that there is no significant difference in the attainment of various groups within the school. However, the school is still targeting specific students and groups to continue to raise attainment levels

The analysis and use of this data is shared with all staff to enable them to focus on specific areas of improvement and is used in target setting for individuals and groups.

**Quality Statement 2: 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 school's Comprehensive Education Plan is extensive and detailed, including setting out ways in which the objectives can be achieved. All staff members are involved in submitting suggestions and in formulating the contents of the plan. The final version is then simplified into a working version that is shared with all staff at the beginning of the year. This promotes commitment to the plan, although there is some variation in the implementation of the new policies as staff are developing at different rates. There are many examples of good practice but inconsistencies mean that this area is not yet well developed.

A variety of intervention strategies is used to support special education students and the changing of the school day has enabled a more focused start for many pupils. The impact has been that there is effective learning time while students are alert and there are fewer confrontational incidents at the beginning of the day.

The school has struggled to get a high level of parental attendance at meetings. It now has meetings on and off the school site and at various times of the day to encourage attendance. The parent co-coordinator is instrumental in reaching out to a wide range of parents but the proportion of parents regularly involved in the learning of their children is still low and that is an area for further development.

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

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

The curriculum offers a broad experience to the students. As well as English language arts and mathematics the school offers science, computing, physical activities, music and the arts. After school activities supplement this with a wide variety of clubs that provide recreational and enhancement activities.

A new social education program is assisting the students to develop into mature young people and helping them to resolve conflicts. As well as a weekly review to identify students in need of academic support the counselor and staff have weekly review meetings to identify students with particular social problems, offering suitable help and advice. This has been a contributory factor in the reduced level of suspensions, with incidents now rarely occurring in the classroom.

Much teaching is good but there is some inconsistency in working in the new way. Students are generally engaged, well motivated and focused on their work. The classrooms offer a stimulating environment which is conducive to learning. Rubrics for levels of work and a behavioral code are on display along with examples of students' work. Teachers have high expectations of the students and the students know their target levels. The combination of these means that they are always encouraged to work well. Celebratory displays are seen around the school, recognizing a range of academic and social areas of the school life and giving positive reinforcement to those students who are giving of their best.

In 2005 attendance was low in comparison to similar schools but improved in 2006. Students are given individual and class encouragement to attain 100% attendance with recognition being given during the morning notices. Attendance during the last academic year was close to 94%, above that generally found in city-wide schools.

**Quality Statement 4: 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 in all aspects.**

The principal has a clear vision of what needs to be done at the school and has shown how he can move it forward by motivating staff. He has built strong relationships with the students and a number of parents, although he also recognizes that more parents need to be directly involved in the learning of their children. The school and community recognize what he has done in moving the school forward. The cabinet works closely together with the leadership team to provide effective management support.

Staff appointment procedures are thorough with staff being asked to teach a class at interview. Professional development of staff is a particular strength of the school. New staff are well supported by formal and informal structures. Teachers have opportunities to watch their peers teach and good experienced teachers also give demonstration lessons. Whole school initiatives are supported by professional development that is having a clear impact in the classroom, developing the teaching styles used and ensuring far more active involvement of the students. The grade teams meet weekly using the meetings for professional development, to monitor student progress and help to ensure consistency within the classrooms while also sharing ideas of how the work can be adapted to meet the needs of individual students. The impact of this staff development has been the change in the dynamics of the learning and the steady rise in achievement.

The principal and assistant principal formally observe lessons and give detailed written feedback showing teachers' strengths and areas for development. The cabinet team is all involved in focused observations of particular aspects of work on a weekly basis.

The day to day running of the school is orderly and smooth. The expectations of students are made clear both verbally and in attractive displays. The whole atmosphere is one of focused learning.

**Quality Statement 5: 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 cabinet team and individual teachers monitor the progress of students using the continuum of class assessments and the end of unit tests. Everyday assessment is used to identify areas of weak understanding, although these are not always compared with the performance of other classes to see where teaching strategies are particularly successful. Grading of work uses a formative model and this means that the students know how to improve their work and raise it to the next level.

The school checks on a regular basis all aspects of its work in meeting and working towards its goals. Small manageable steps are identified and there are processes for staff to work together to attain these. They include the cabinet taking regular 'learning walks' that focus on a specific aspect and the weekly grade planning meetings and the academic review group. All of these assist in assessing how well the plan to meet the goals is working at varying levels from individual student to a whole school level. There are many examples where collaborative instruction is used to benefit all students. These include the planning undertaken by the grade teams and work in the classroom where the instruction and support given to the students is carried out by a team of staff.

Special education students are supported in an appropriate manner, and gifted and talented students are suitably stretched with higher-level skills such as balanced reasoning. Peer evaluative skills are developed at an early age and all students are considered equally valuable in raising their attainment levels. Everything that is carried out in the school is focused on improving the academic and social development of the students.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Paerdegat School (PS251)</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