



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Rafael Cordero y Molina

Intermediate Sschool 302

**350 Linwood Street
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Martin Weinstein

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Reviewer: Chip Morrison

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Intermediate School 302, the Rafael Cordero y Molina School, currently serves approximately 1100 students in grades 6 through 8. Approximately 57% of students are Hispanic, 37% Black, 6% Asian and others, and less than 1% White. About 14% are special education students and 19% are English language learners. The most common home language is Spanish. Approximately 97% of students are registered as Title I eligible, considerably higher than the average for similar schools as well as the City average. In 2005, average daily attendance was around 90%, equivalent to the average for similar schools and just below the City average (92%) for schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a knowledgeable instructional leader, expert manager of resources, and a respected and effective change agent.
- The school makes good use of available data to identify student needs, plan instructional programs, and monitor progress toward goals.
- The principal has been effective in distributing responsibility for instructional leadership among assistant principals, coaches, and lead teachers.
- Teachers are well-trained in the workshop model of instruction, which has been implemented consistently throughout the school.
- The school places special and effective emphasis on writing across the curriculum, including writing in science and mathematics.
- The school pays careful attention to special education students and English language learners, providing a large number of Spanish bilingual classes for the latter.
- The entire school community takes collective responsibility for identifying and meeting student needs, both academic and emotional.
- Students are for the most part well-behaved, attentive in class, and appreciative of their teachers' efforts to help them learn.
- Over the past four years, the principal and his leadership team have made important progress in establishing a safe and secure school environment.
- The school has created a welcoming, and supportive environment for parents.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue providing professional development for teachers in the use of assessment data to shape instruction to the needs of individuals and groups.
- Work with teachers to develop more consistent ways of tracking progress toward specific, measurable, interim goals at the classroom level.
- Develop complementary ways of tracking progress toward these interim goals across classrooms, subject areas, and grade levels.
- Work to develop consistent ways of tracking student progress on specific skills and concepts in science and social studies.
- Continue working with teachers to develop even more effective means of monitoring the extent to which each student is mastering each lesson objective.
- Continue developing a standards-based system for evaluating student writing and systemically tracking progress across classrooms, grade levels, and subject areas.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

In his four years of service, the principal, with the strong support of his leadership team, has improved the school into one that is now helping large numbers of students make significant progress toward meeting challenging State standards. This has been accomplished through a combination of leadership continuity, heightened expectations for both staff and students, carefully targeted professional development, a firm approach to managing student behavior (the principal and one of the assistant principals are both former deans), and the skillful use of data to identify needs and track progress toward goals. As a result, the climate of the school has become significantly more conducive to learning, teachers consistently implement an engaging, results-oriented instructional model, and the school community is becoming increasingly effective at identifying and meeting the many academic, social, and emotional needs of the children it serves. The school has one of the largest IEP populations in the Region and many of the students are test eligible. Rafael Cordero y Molina is also the only barrier free school in the district.

The school continues to face significant challenges, including overcrowding and large class size (especially in the bilingual classrooms), substantial numbers of English language learners, and the fact that neighboring schools with “gifted and talented” programs tend to drain away students at the upper performance levels. The school is the only junior high school in the Region that shares space with an elementary school, which has prevented the school from reducing class size immeasurably. Nevertheless, a firm foundation for progress has already been established, examples of best practice exist throughout the school, and instructional leaders have a clear understanding of necessary next steps and are already making progress in these directions.

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 makes good use of available data on school and student performance to understand needs and track progress toward goals. In addition to results from mandated State assessments, the school develops and effectively uses its own data sources. These include results from the Princeton Review interim assessments, assessments for struggling readers, and teachers’ own unit tests and conferencing notes.

The school carefully examines subgroup performance, including that of ethnic groups. Special attention is paid to the progress of English language learners and special education students, as large numbers of struggling students have been found to fall into these two categories. The school also carefully tracks disciplinary incidents and has recently acquired a computer program to help with this.

Instructional leaders make useful comparisons of progress from one year to the next and compare the school’s progress to that of similar schools using reports provided by the City

for this purpose. The school also monitors the number of students who succeed in gaining entrance to specialized high schools. Instructional leaders are in the process of developing more effective means of comparing the progress of students across classrooms and grade levels. They are also beginning to take a “value added” approach to data analysis by looking more closely at the contribution that different teachers make in helping students progress, regardless of starting point.

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 school sets annual incremental goals for the number of students meeting or exceeding standards as measured by State tests, disaggregated by subgroup. These goals, together with plans for achieving them, are clearly articulated in the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan. The plan, which is especially thorough and thoughtful, has been a collaborative effort, involving parents and school community members representing each subject and grade level.

The plan focuses clearly on curriculum areas that have been identified for improvement, and on subgroups, such as English language learners and special education students, whose progress is a particular concern. Individual classroom teachers can typically articulate clear goals for student progress, especially for moving students up from one proficiency level to the next, for example, helping “level 1” students move up to level 2. However, teachers are less likely to have specific interim goals for progress during the year, nor do they yet have consistent and reliable ways of documenting progress toward skill-level goals.

The school pays good attention to the needs of at-risk students, providing various interventions including pull-out English as a second language (ESL) services, and individual and small-group tutoring during the extended school day. Teams meet regularly to review the progress of students in intervention and to design effective additional strategies as necessary. The progress and needs of individual students are reviewed informally on almost a daily basis.

Parents report significant improvements over the past four years in parent-teacher and parent-school communication. The school communicates high expectations to parents through curriculum workshops, and also offers ESL workshops. Parents expressed appreciation for the school’s efforts to communicate expectations to them, to address issues, and to provide a safe environment for learning. The overall goal of helping all students make progress in mastering challenging academic standards, regardless of starting point, is a clear, shared focus for all members of the school community, thus maximizing support for student learning.

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.

The school is largely successful in aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment with State standards, especially in English language arts and mathematics. Pacing calendars help ensure that students in different classrooms cover the same material. However, instruction is more likely to be standards-based and shaped by assessment results in mathematics and, to a lesser extent, in English language arts than in social studies or science, which tend to be more theme-based. An effective schoolwide, interdisciplinary approach to writing is much in evidence, in mathematics and science classrooms as well as language arts programs.

Teachers are held accountable, and hold themselves accountable, for helping their students make progress in mastering State standards. All teachers document student progress through the use of assessment binders that contain the results of State and classroom assessments. Some teachers clearly make effective use of these documents to track progress for individuals and the class as a whole, and to differentiate instruction to identified needs. However, these practices are not yet consistent across all classrooms.

The principal is a skillful manager of the school’s resources, and has worked very effectively to optimize the schedule, budget, and staffing in support of identified student needs. For example, he has hired a former superintendent for special education to help oversee the school’s special education programs, and has hired additional staff to support the literacy and mathematics coaches. He has also used the budget to fund a successful program for over-age students, and to pay teachers to engage in professional development activities in areas of specific need.

High levels of student attentiveness and engagement are evident. There is a successful emphasis on “accountable talk” with students being required to justify their answers to the teacher’s questions, and sometimes asking questions of their own. However, while the purpose of lessons is almost always evident, it is not always clear how teachers monitor the extent to which individual students are learning what is taught.

Interviews with instructional leaders, parents, teachers, and students provided clear evidence of schoolwide attention to the needs of students, including both academic needs and personal needs. For example, students say that they can always go to a teacher or other adult in the building for help with a problem, but that even if they don’t ask for help, someone notices. Student attendance and punctuality are high priorities. The school is still working on strategies to deal with a subset of students who are chronically tardy. Repeated absences receive immediate attention.

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 proficient.

The principal has managed to attract and retain a committed group of teachers who work well together, support each other’s instruction, and show an ongoing interest in professional learning. Teachers are selected for their content expertise, commitment to children, flexibility, and demonstrated instructional effectiveness.

The principal pays special attention to the provision of professional development opportunities for teachers and, as noted above, uses his budget to encourage and support professional learning. There is now an identified need for professional development in the use of assessment data to further differentiate and improve instruction.

The principal effectively distributes responsibility for instructional leadership among his assistant principals, coaches, leader teachers, and other support staff. They are all in classrooms on a regular basis, give useful feedback based on a shared vision of instructional quality, and identify professional development needs of individuals. The results of this schoolwide attention to instructional quality are evident in various consistent and effective practices, including use of the workshop model in the structure of lessons, posting of student work, assessment binders, and accountable talk.

Planning and evaluation of progress occurs in regular team meetings. Subject-area teachers at each grade level have common preparation periods which they use to plan, share ideas, review progress, and discuss strategies for helping struggling students. In addition, teachers and instructional leaders strategize informally on a daily basis.

The principal is an effective leader and change agent. In addition to his skills as an instructional leader and manager, he is especially effective at working with students in this age group, combining good humor with a no-nonsense approach to discipline. An accomplished runner himself, he has formed a popular running group for students.

The school now runs much more smoothly than it did in the past. Though there are still some incidents most students are well-behaved and respectful of their teachers and each other. Partnerships with outside community-based organizations, notably the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, help to provide useful community-based services for students and their families.

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.

Instructional leaders monitor progress toward goals identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan on an annual basis. They carefully scrutinize the results of mandated State assessments making comparisons within and across classrooms, and develop thoughtful plans to address identified weaknesses in each subject area. These plans are revised on an annual basis and over the past four years have led to substantial improvements in student learning.

Also, teachers carefully track progress of individual students using a range of assessments and data sources, including unit tests, Princeton Review interim assessments, and their own conferencing notes and classroom observations. In some subjects, particularly mathematics and to a lesser extent English literacy, specific, skill-level interim goals are reasonably well specified, and so it is possible for teachers to monitor interim progress and revise plans accordingly during the course of the year. However, this is not the case for all subject areas; there is clear room for growth in helping teachers track and document progress toward specific interim goals in writing, social studies, and science.

There is also room for growth in the development of systems and processes that instructional leaders can use to track progress toward interim goals by classroom, subject,

and grade level. The Princeton Review interim assessments in mathematics and English language arts serve this function to some extent. However, there is as yet no consistent way to aggregate the rich knowledge that individual teachers have of students at the classroom level into a more complete grade-level or subject-area picture of student strengths and weaknesses in particular skill areas as these develop over time.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Rafael Cordero y Molina (IS 302)	∅	✓	+
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	