



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Isobel Rooney School

Middle School 80

**149 East Mosholu Parkway
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Lovey Mazique-Rivera

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Reviewer: Kath Wood

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Isobel Rooney Middle School has 760 students from grades 6 through 8. The school shares a building with a kindergarten through 8th grade empowerment school. A majority of the students (69%) are from Hispanic backgrounds alongside 16% Black, 7% White and 8% Asian and others. A third of the students are English language learners when they enter the school and 24% are special education students. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 77% of its students qualifying which is higher than the City average. Attendance figures are 87%, which is below the City average.

The building is being renovated which means that parts of the school, including the yard, are out of use. Some facilities are shared with the other school so resource utilization must be coordinated by the two principals.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's warm and caring approach is highly respected by faculty and students.
- The principal and assistant principals function effectively as a close and supportive team.
- There is a common goal for school improvement, shared by all members of faculty.
- Great effort has been expended to create a calm and orderly culture, making the school a pleasant place in which to work and learn.
- The focus on literacy skills across the curriculum is beginning to have an impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The mini-school system is very effective in creating collaboration among teachers and positive relationships between students.
- There is a strong commitment to parental partnership alongside family and individual support.

What the school needs to improve

- Introduce the new systems of data analysis and student tracking as a matter of urgency, and use them to raise student achievement in all subjects.
- Improve students' attendance to tackle the negative impact low attendance has on results.
- Increase differentiation of instruction so that students of all levels of performance are appropriately challenged.
- Make the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning more rigorous, so that all instruction matches the quality of the best.
- Introduce action planning to address specific areas for improvement with detailed timescales and interim goals that can be monitored, evaluated and amended if necessary.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is an undeveloped school but with proficient features.

The administration has established clear roles and responsibilities to ensure that it is able to function as an efficient and effective team in tackling school underachievement. The principal has worked hard to raise expectations within the school community and has created positive and supportive teams within each grade level to improve the quality of teaching and learning. She is well respected by adults and students alike and is taking everyone along with her in pursuit of the school goals.

The principal has made many changes in her three years at the school. Day-to-day organization has been reviewed to ensure that expectations for order, discipline and responsibility are clear and understood by all. Student enrollment has decreased during the last three years, bringing the school capacity closer to the City average although space within the building is still limited. A new arrangement of mini-schools on different floors has been introduced this year. The 6th grade students are all assigned to the School for Social Justice and the 7th and 8th graders are selected for either the Performing Arts or Journalism and Business houses to respond to their particular skills and aptitudes. This has had a positive impact on students' behavior and the school culture is calmer, more orderly and focused on work.

This year, the major focus for development is to raise academic achievement. This involves professional development for teachers to enable them to analyze data more effectively in order to address individual students' needs. At present, systems are new and have not had sufficient time to be used consistently either to inform teaching practice or to impact on results. All staff members are committed to raising standards of achievement and are working closely in teams to get the new systems up and running as quickly as possible.

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 undeveloped overall.

The school collects a range of data to map the progress of individual students. This information is gathered from results of tests, quizzes and classroom records along with detail of personal development. Until recently, teachers' assessments, used for report cards and planning, were not aligned closely enough to the standards to give an accurate picture of performance on State tests. This led to a mismatch between expectations and actual achievement and made it difficult for teachers to have a good understanding of what each student knew and could do. Unit tests are now in place to measure progress in each subject every six to eight weeks. These are beginning to provide a much clearer picture at both class and grade level of how students progress over time.

The performance of individual English language learners and special education students is more closely monitored. This is due to more regular, interim assessment programs and as

a result of the much smaller class sizes through which these groups are served. Many of the students in the small specialized classes achieved better results in tests than their peers in the larger general education classes. Analysis of this data has led the principal and assistant principals to review and revise programs and instructional support.

The overall school performance when compared with City schools and similar schools and indicates that achievement in all subjects is below expectations. Systems to analyze and compare achievement between classes at the same grade level have only just been introduced. The administration has already identified important issues that the school needs to address. For example, in response to the identified variation in achievement between boys and girls, the principal has piloted two single sex classes within the 6th grade. The impact of this initiative will be evaluated on a regular basis by the principal with unit test results monitored and compared against students in general and special education classes.

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 undeveloped with some proficient features.

The school does not use data effectively to identify the precise learning needs of students. As a result, no specific subject goals for achievement can be set for individuals, classes or grades. The principal has introduced measures to address this issue and coaches are training subject teachers to analyze test results to inform their planning for mini lessons, general instruction and intervention strategies. This professional development, undertaken with the mathematics and English language arts departments, uses test scores to demonstrate whether students were low, middle or high within each level and the next steps that must be taken to move their learning forward. Although it will take time for the process to become fully rooted in classroom practice, the systems have the potential to impact positively on results.

Students in the smaller special education and English language learner classes often do better than the level 2 students in general education classes because of the high levels of support provided. The principal has recognized this discrepancy and has developed class monitoring sheets to identify individual student needs, in addition to the available intervention services. These are to be shared with the administrators, coaches and support staff on a bi-weekly basis so that resources can be coordinated effectively and targeted as appropriate.

High expectations are conveyed to students and their parents. Students know that they have to work hard in order to do well but are not given the precise information to explain how they can do this. They are not given Individual short- and longer-term targets for improvement, based on analyses of strengths and weaknesses that would enable students to identify their own needs and next steps towards success.

Great effort is put into increasing parental involvement in their children’s learning. Parents learning English are well supported through workshops, information and newsletters provided in their home language and translators at all meetings. This gives them a greater understanding of how to assist their children with homework tasks and assignments.

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 curriculum has a clear focus on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The mandated curriculum is aligned to school needs and is strengthened by the addition of specific programs like Wilson, Great Leap and guided reading in order to respond to students' needs. The school identified that a high proportion of students were underachieving in mathematics, science and social studies because of a deficiency in reading skills, particularly decoding and comprehension. This has led to a whole school focus on teaching reading across the curriculum with support and resources provided for all teachers.

Despite the school's best efforts, attendance is below the City average. Only a third of students had perfect attendance in September in spite of the motivators and reward systems. A large number of students have been identified as chronic cases, and intervention and support procedures are in place. High priority is given to monitoring all student absences with follow up calls, home visits and letters to parents.

Relationships between adults and students are strong. The homeroom teachers know their students well and provide advice and support on personal as well as academic issues. The mini-school structure provides a valuable service in developing teamworking and mutual support among student groups. The principal has an excellent relationship with her students. She takes time to get to know them well and students respect and admire her.

There is insufficient differentiation of instruction to respond to the needs of individual students. This is because, until recently, there were no formal procedures for identification of students' strengths and weaknesses so teachers were not in a position to plan specifically for small groups. Many lessons involve whole class instruction, providing insufficient challenge for the highest performing and too much challenge for those with difficulties in their learning. This leads to loss of student engagement. Administrators do not monitor the quality of planning and instruction rigorously enough to ensure that there is consistency of practice across the school.

The school has developed effective partnerships with a range of agencies to support learning. For example, a local resident who works for Microsoft regularly comes into school to work with the students in the 'Journalism and Business' school. He provides a very positive role model and enhances the curriculum by assisting with activities like the school newspaper. All students in this mini-school have been provided with a personal laptop, leading to increased engagement and improvement in keyboard skills.

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 administrators select and deploy staff carefully to ensure that there is a balance of established and new teachers in each subject and mini-school. This provides a support

network for those newly appointed alongside recognition of the personal qualities and skills that are best suited to the age and abilities of the students. For example, the homeroom teachers chosen to lead the 6th grade classes in the School for Social Justice have highly-developed nurturing skills which assist students in settling into their new school environment more quickly. As a result, this year has had a much calmer start as 6th grade teachers have encouraged positive and supportive relationships between students and good attitudes to learning.

The principal knows the capabilities of her staff well. Regular observations, undertaken by all administrators, identify individual professional development needs which are then addressed either in-house or by attending district courses. The principal realized that last year's observation program did not allow for follow up after feedback. She has consequently included monitoring visits to check on progress this year to provide a more effective structure and enable administrators to monitor consistency of practice across and between grades. At present, inconsistent practice is having a negative impact on students' achievement. Prior to this academic year, insufficient professional development was provided to assist teachers in using data to guide their instruction. Teachers did not analyze test information to inform their planning or to group students appropriately for differentiated tasks. This is now being highlighted as a training focus and teachers are beginning to use target sheets and group planning forms with some effect. Although some common planning time is scheduled, this is not currently used for planning differentiated activities or for scrutiny of students' work.

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 undeveloped.

The school administration has identified the need to develop school action plans to address specific areas for improvement. The principal recognizes that these plans require timescales for interim goals which will enable monitoring and evaluation of the selected strategies. Presently, school goals are planned for long-term improvement which makes measurement difficult and often leads to disappointment when targets are not met. The school is achieving significant success in several of its initiatives but these are masked by consistently low test results.

The principal is always willing to try out new ideas and to introduce practices aimed at raising standards. She is not afraid to change procedures that are not working. For example, the guided mathematics teachers working on a pull-out program realized that their students were missing the introduction to new topics. The plans have been revised to provide push-in so that the guided instruction is more closely integrated with and more supportive of the planned class session.

The initiatives described in this report, with effective and consistent implementation, have the potential to significantly raise student's achievement and the school is well placed to move forward. However these require immediate introduction so that there is time for them to have an impact on this year's results.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Isobel Rooney School (MS 80)	∅	✓	+
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		