



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Paul Robeson Middle School

**Middle School 203
339 Morris Avenue
Bronx
NY 10451**

Principal: William Hewlett Jr.

Dates of review: January 23 - 24, 2007

Reviewer: Roy Storrs

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Paul Robeson is a middle school with 534 students enrolled from grade 6 through 8. The school population comprises 67.5% Hispanic, 32.2% Black and 0.3% Asian and others. About 20% of the students are English language learners with Spanish as the predominant first language. Sixteen per cent of the roll is special education students taught in self-contained or collaborative team teaching classes.

The school receives Title 1 funding with 100% of students qualifying. This figure is well above the average for similar and City schools. At 88.3%, attendance is below the average for similar and City schools. The school shares the building with two high schools and a special school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is devoted to the school and has the respect of students, staff and parents.
- The principal collects and analyzes a range of data which is made available to the faculty.
- Some teachers make good use of City and State information, and data they have generated internally to identify students' specific strengths and weaknesses.
- Most students are well behaved, attentive in class, and keen to learn.
- There are some good examples of instruction that is well differentiated and engages students' interest.
- Creative management of the budget ensures that resources are targeted towards the school's priorities.
- The school provides numerous intervention strategies to support particular groups of students.
- A variety of enrichment activities give students a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The school has made the strategic appointment of an assistant principal with responsibility for instruction and differentiation.
- The parent coordinator works tirelessly on many levels to increase parents' involvement in their children's education.

What the school needs to improve

- Make the administration more pro-active in raising expectations and in focusing all activities on improving attainment across the school.
- Ensure teachers undertake regular, periodic assessments and use the data to set precise goals for students, classes and grades and to compare progress over time.
- Ensure that the school assesses the effectiveness of its intervention programs.
- In the drive for higher attainment, make teachers more accountable for the progress their students make.
- Ensure the administration undertake more classroom observations followed by constructive verbal and written feedback with a view to further improving the quality of differentiated instruction.
- Introduce more rigorous systems of monitoring and revising plans through well structured meetings at subject, grade, cabinet and administration levels.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal opened the school six years ago after the closure of other schools and inherited a high proportion of the staff. He has worked diligently to achieve the school's own identity. He is involved in every aspect of school life and has become well respected by the whole school community. A sound staff structure has been established and includes a number of newly appointed teachers and senior staff who have brought new vigor to the school.

Considerable support is directed at the high proportion of students whose first language is not English and those performing at level 1. These students' needs are being addressed by a variety of intervention programs. Over the past three years the school has made steady gains in performance, but achievement remains low. The challenge now is to accelerate the upward trend. The principal collects and uses data to identify students' needs and to allocate resources accordingly. The school does not, however, make sufficient use of the data to plan and set precise goals for individual students, classes and grades and compare progress over time.

While the curriculum is appropriately focused on literacy and mathematics, a range of enrichment activities gives the curriculum breadth and balance. Students enjoy school and respond well in the lessons which engage their interest. The school has formed fruitful partnerships with community based organizations and works hard to involve its parents.

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.

External data is gathered and used in a variety of ways. The principal collects and analyzes methodically the results of City and State tests and compares the attendance figures for each student. This gives him a useful overview of grades, classes and individual students. Grade teachers make their own formative assessments based on work assignments to help differentiate their instruction. Particularly effective, as in the case of one mathematics teacher, is the practice of setting regular, diagnostic tests which she has devised. Computer analysis of these results indicates the students' understanding of each mathematics topic, item by item, and keeps the teacher constantly aware of their performance and progress. This excellent practice is not a consistent feature across the school.

External data helps the school identify those students with particular needs such as the high proportion performing at level 1 and those students in danger of being held over. As a result, they are allocated to appropriate classes and intervention strategies. Spanish is the first language of a high proportion of students for whom data analysis is undertaken to ensure they progress successfully in their home language and in general education

classes. A proportion of these students take extended visits to their home country. Using Title 3 funding, the school successfully tracks the progress of these students with interrupted formal education and helps them to catch up. Individual education plans for special education students contain essential sources of data to ensure academic intervention services follow the students' progress. Resource room teachers make effective use of several diagnostic assessment instruments to elicit specific information on individual students. These teachers review this data carefully alongside other factors to help class teachers understand their students' performance. The principal is aware that the school is less successful in using data to compare itself with similar schools or to measure its own performance year on year and understands that this area needs to be addressed.

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.

The school is conscious of its responsibility to improve the performance of all its pupils. The detailed Comprehensive Education Plan states the school's intentions in this respect and has clear goals for the school as a whole. These rightly focus on the basics of literacy and mathematics. The plan sets challenging targets, for instance a ten per cent increase in the number of students moving up one proficiency level. It is less specific about how the goals will be met or in detailing how they affect each student, class or grade. The formulation of the plan involves a range of people, but is not a wholly collaborative effort and its goals are not widely understood. The faculty as a whole is relatively new to using data as a basis for planning and setting short and long-term goals. There is little evidence of teachers setting regular, periodic assessments for students and using the data to set precise goals for individual students, classes and grades and compare progress over time.

Most attention is rightly given to those students in greatest need of improvement. General goals for these students are set within the context of the classes or intervention programs. For instance, each grade has a bilingual class for English language learners with instruction in both English and Spanish. The main goal of these classes is that students' use of English will improve to the extent that they transfer to general education classes as soon as possible.

Parents appreciate the school ensuring that they receive information in their own language. As many parents have little contact with the school, a goal in the Comprehensive Education Plan is to increase parent participation. The parent coordinator is the significant driving force in this endeavour and is an invaluable source of information, help and guidance to parents and students.

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 focus on English language arts and mathematics reflects the school's conviction that success in these areas is fundamental for all students. Curriculum breadth and balance

are assured by a range of enrichment activities and clubs. The school is now considering looking for more cross-subject links to further unify the curriculum. The principal manages the budget creatively; directing resources to meet students' needs. Examples of this are the intervention strategies, including the well attended Saturday academy. Staffing, class distribution and scheduling decisions appropriately reflect the school's priorities such as supporting low performing students and English language learners. A particular strength is that many staff members speak fluent Spanish, which helps the students and parents considerably. In contrast, the impact of carefully considered scheduling decisions is diluted when teachers do not attend arranged meetings.

Few teachers base their planning on specific and measurable goals and instruction is not entirely based on available data. Consequently, differentiated instruction is not firmly rooted in classes across the school. The administration is aware that it must hold teachers to account for the progress their students make if it is to drive up student achievement. Most students are well behaved and keen to learn and the good examples of well differentiated instruction engage the students' interest. In such lessons students are attentive and participate fully in class, often working cooperatively and productively in pairs or groups.

Relationships between staff and students are mostly cordial and students know there is someone with whom they could discuss any concerns. Regular attendance is a priority and the school takes immediate action when necessary. Administrators and the deans respond rapidly to the few students who cut class or skip school. Persistent non-attendance triggers home visits to discuss the matter. In spite of these commendable efforts, attendance remains below that of similar and City schools, partly due to students making extended visits to their country of origin.

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.

Having inherited many of the initial staff when the school opened, the principal is firm in his determination to select new staff who will make a difference. High expectations, flexibility, the ability to inspire others and experience in the use of data are the qualities he seeks. A recent example is the strategic appointment of an assistant principal with responsibility for promoting increasingly better instruction and differentiation as a means of improving performance. Only in post since the beginning of term, he is already having a positive impact. Professional development is closely aligned to the school's needs. Some development sessions are school-based and teachers also appreciate opportunities to attend training sessions outside school which they turnkey to colleagues. The lack of regular meetings between subject and grade teams to plan their work collaboratively reduces the teams' overall cohesion, efficiency and effectiveness.

Members of the administration walk through the school regularly which provides them with a valuable overview. They now recognize the need to make more classroom observations followed by constructive verbal and written feedback with a view to improving the quality of instruction. Some teachers have taken the opportunity to observe others and find it valuable in honing their pedagogical skills, but this is not a regular or planned feature.

The principal is devoted to the school and its students for whom he has high aspirations and has earned their respect and that of staff and parents. In general, the school runs

smoothly on a day-to-day basis due to a range of well thought through procedures. Occasionally, systems which are not tight enough result in misunderstandings or some staff members not adhering to agreed procedures. Productive relationships with a variety of agencies enhance the work of the school and effectively contribute to raising student achievement.

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's Comprehensive Education Plan contains most of the ingredients to enable the school to flourish. It is clearly expressed, but its content is not widely known and understood because a limited number of people are involved in its production and dissemination. The principal has high aspirations for the school and works diligently to achieve this goal. He has great presence across the school which gives him a sound overview of its activities. However, he carries too much of the burden on his shoulders and does not delegate as much responsibility as he might to other staff at different levels. Several committees with precise remits are effective in helping guide aspects of the school's work and therefore undertake an informal monitoring role. Otherwise there is no clear system for monitoring the impact of the school's work and setting new plans to address any inconsistencies. For instance, there is an impressive range of intervention and support programs aimed at helping students progress to higher performance. Data is collected on the students on these programs, but the information is not scrutinized to check how much progress they have made and, consequently, how effective is the provision.

The lack of rigorous systems for monitoring and revising plans through well structured meetings at subject, grade, cabinet and administration levels has led to a lack of cohesion alongside some teachers not following agreed policy decisions. As a consequence, the potential impact of the school's efforts is diminished. The school has many of the essential ingredients in place; many dedicated members of staff, well behaved students and the will to succeed. The administration recognises this and appreciates the need to be more proactive in raising expectations and in focusing all activities on improving achievement across the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Paul Robeson Middle School PS 203	∅	✓	+
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		