



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Dr. Roland N. Patterson School**

**Community Intermediate School 229**

**275 Harlem River Park Bridge  
Bronx  
NY 10453**

**Principal: Dr. Ezra Matthias**

**Dates of review: October 10-11, 2006**

**Reviewer: Clive Parsons**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Dr. Roland N. Patterson School serves just over 400 students across grades 5 through 8. Numbers have been dropping steadily for a number of years. Just over 50% of students are Black, with over 40% being Hispanic. There are small proportions of students from other ethnic backgrounds. English language learners comprise just over 12% of students, and there is a lower proportion of students recently arrived in the country than in most other schools. There 87 special education students, over 20% of the school population. Seventy eight percent of students are eligible for Title 1 funding. Student attendance, at 91.8%, is above similar schools, although below that of schools across the City. Student stability is relatively low.

A higher proportion of teachers than normal have spent more than two years at the school, although, overall, teachers are less experienced than in other schools. Staff absence is slightly higher than average.

The school shares the building with an elementary school. Classrooms are mainly open, although some modifications have been made to create sectioned off or enclosed spaces. There is no schoolyard and the lunch room is near learning areas.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the continued improvement of the school, a very good understanding of what high quality learning looks like and is bringing increased order, rigor and direction to its work.
- Some instruction is well developed, with clear objectives, aligned activities and time for review and reflection by students.
- Data is increasingly well used to identify and target additional support and intervention for students, which is happening earlier and having greater impact.
- Collection, review and evaluation of data to aid planning, identify weaknesses and drive forward instruction is improving well in mathematics and English language arts.
- Effective collaborative planning is resulting in some candid self-evaluation and consistency across a grade team.
- There are good opportunities for students to participate in enrichment activities, especially through the arts, increasing their satisfaction with and enjoyment of school.
- Effective work with external partners, including community-based organisations, is having a positive effect on the school's climate and the preparedness of students to learn.
- Some good work with families is enabling them to play a more consistent role in their children's education.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop consistent interim assessment systems, including monitoring and tracking, for all subjects in addition to mathematics and English language arts.
- Ensure that class assessments are valid, reliable, consistent and aligned with the required standards.
- Ensure that all lessons have clear and specific standards-based learning objectives, provide differentiated support and challenge, based on data, and enable teachers and students to assess progress.
- Provide more consistent opportunities for students to assess their own work and that of their peers using rubrics developed in class and specific to the work in hand.
- Build the capacity of more staff to monitor and evaluate the impact of programs so that timely changes can be made to ensure that actions have the required impact.
- Develop a more reflective, learning-centred organisation for staff as well as students, where all take greater responsibility for their own progress and development.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a proficient school overall, with several undeveloped aspects.**

CIS 229 is making the transition to becoming a learning-centered school. The school has collected much data and is now starting to use it to drive the improvements required. Results in State and City tests are improving, but at too slow a rate. They remain below results in similar schools and are well below those in schools across the City. The school is not closing the gap on other schools as fast as the staff knows it should. The school's own self-review has identified correctly what it needs to do to improve. Systems and structures have steadily been put in place over the years to aid this improvement and these are now being implemented with increasing energy. At the moment, however, inconsistencies in practice are limiting the impact on the results and outcomes of the school. Expectations and requirements are not yet being enacted with urgency or monitored and evaluated with necessary rigor for the school to take the next step in improving its overall effectiveness.

Recently, much attention has been paid to improving instruction and test results in English language arts and mathematics. A wide variety of enrichment activities, especially through the arts, have been provided as a way of engaging students more effectively. Less attention has been paid to other subjects, so that assessment systems in science and social studies are less well developed. Nevertheless, the school expects to have reached its science target when official data is released.

The building itself is often not conducive to high quality learning. The open nature of classrooms makes it easy for students to be distracted. Some modifications to develop enclosed areas makes some spaces seem dark and cramped. The lunch room being located so close to learning areas is another distraction. There is no schoolyard to enable students to run off excess energy, or simply get some fresh air.

### 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 principal has established a computerized database to maintain an overview of students' progress. The system includes information on potential barriers to learning, as well as general information including gender and ethnicity. This enables comparisons in the performance of different groups of students to be carried out and the identification of possible reasons for the results. Groups that the school monitors include those close to achieving a higher level in tests, special education students, English language learners and those performing at level 1.

The principal identified a mismatch in teachers' evaluations of students' performance and their subsequent test results. This has required a shift to more accurate and reliable data

and other evidence. The school is therefore implementing increasingly robust systems for gathering data on the performance of students in English language arts and in mathematics. In mathematics, for example, screening and baseline tests are used to identify areas of strength and weakness, as well as overall performance. Common interim assessments are then used to track progress through the year. This interim data is monitored by teachers and the mathematics coach to evaluate student progress. Until this information is available electronically, it will remain difficult to track the progress of key groups of students as closely as the school would wish.

The school's focus on improving the students' literacy and mathematical skills has meant that the use of data in science and other subjects has not developed at the same pace. Consequently, interim assessment strategies, including monitoring and tracking of students' progress, are undeveloped in all remaining subject areas. In addition, class assessments are not reliable or consistent enough nor aligned sufficiently with State standards.

**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.**

Establishing goals is a major driving force within the school, with a number of new initiatives this year. Drafting of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan has involved a wider group of staff, which is helping to build the capacity of the school. All staff are involved in establishing their own goals with the principal. Students also set their goals for the year ahead. A particular target group for the school is those students who have just missed reaching a level 3 on annual tests.

Data is used well to identify weaknesses in the students' literacy and mathematical skills. A wide range of interventions is available to provide additional support for students. Often this will involve staff pushing into class to support target students or pulling them out to do likewise. Providing extended day activities is another strategy used. The principal has allocated a significant number of teacher periods to providing academic intervention. This has the added benefit of extending the skills of the teachers concerned, who are then deploying them in their own classrooms.

Collaborative activity is also enabling teachers to meet specific needs more extensively. For example, grade 5 teachers identified a number of weaknesses from student tests. Intervention programs were established for some individual students. Each teacher also agreed to plan a mini lesson for all classes to address the broader needs identified across the grade. There is a drive to develop immediate classroom goals through using rubrics, teachers' feedback and students' self-assessment to identify next steps in learning. The effectiveness with which this is happening remains variable.

Some parent volunteers help around school. The school reaches out to parents in a variety of ways, such as workshops and letters. These are sometimes aimed at supporting the parents themselves as well as giving them information and skills to enable them to support their child's education more extensively. Parents value the school's open door policy and the ease with which they can contact teachers and other staff. The school remains committed to increasing the number of parents consistently involved in this way.

**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 overall, but with several undeveloped areas.**

Teachers are held accountable for improving instruction. They discuss annual goals with the principal. Feedback from classroom visits and learning walks is provided so that they can develop further. Some opportunities are also available for them to visit other teachers’ and to work with coaches. There are examples of well-developed practice in some classes. These are exemplified by clear and specific objectives for students which are linked to the required standards. Students are carefully grouped, based on the available data, and expected to work as a team, discussing ideas and solutions. The teacher is able to spend time supporting or challenging individuals as appropriate and monitoring their progress. Students respond well in these situations, engage with the content and learn.

Some lessons, however, do not require students to engage at all times or have activities that distract from, rather than support, the lesson’s objective, which is not always sufficiently well focused. Too little use is made of rubrics to enable students to engage in self- and peer-evaluation and to identify their next steps in learning. The school has now recognized that it is through more consistent higher quality instruction that it will increase the number of students working at level 3 and above.

There are good opportunities for students to participate in enrichment activities, especially through the arts. This is increasing their satisfaction and enjoyment of school. Resources are targeted at need, so that teachers generally have the tools to do the job. Technology, such as computers and smart boards, is being used increasingly to improve students’ learning. The move to smaller communities through academies is providing students with a more personalized experience. Time and effort is put into getting to know students’ personal needs. Relationships are respectful and students know someone on the staff to whom they could turn should the need arise. There do remain, however, isolated incidents of poor attitudes and behavior, which are not always picked up and dealt with consistently by all staff.

Much attention has been paid to improving students’ attendance, with some success. This has been identified as a significant factor in enabling the school to reduce the number of students performing at level 1.

**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 frequently observes lessons, and provides advice and guidance to teachers. He has a good understanding of what high quality learning looks like and what instruction is required to achieve it. There are good examples of teachers observing each other and working together to improve their practice. Collaborative activity, such as looking at students’ responses to tests, is developing greater collegiality. It is also encouraging teachers to more honestly evaluate their own performance and its impact on students’ learning. This candid self-evaluation is not yet sufficiently widespread.

Evidence from data review and classroom observations are used to target school-wide developments and professional development for staff. These are appropriately focused on improving instruction and outcomes for students. Teachers themselves judge that professional development is now more strategic and targeted. They also welcome the opportunities provided to work with coaches and other colleagues. The school is increasingly effective in working with external agencies, including community-based organizations.

The principal has gained the respect of the local community, including parents, staff and students because of improvements that the school has achieved over the previous few years. He has worked with staff to develop a clear vision for moving the school to the next level of effectiveness. More staff, but by no means all, are accepting responsibility and feeling empowered to effect change and improvement. Leadership is gradually being dispersed through the school. The capacity to shift to the next level is within the school, but the implementation of plans and intentions is not yet rigorous enough.

**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 overall.**

The principal is bringing increased order, rigor and direction to the school's work in establishing priorities and setting goals. Standards are rising, but not fast enough. The school is getting better at judging whether plans are succeeding, although evaluations are not always sufficiently timely or specific enough to enable changes and modifications to be made that will make a real difference to students' learning and achievements. Learning walks are used with increasing effect to support improved and more consistent instruction. Tests and assessments are being used more diagnostically to differentiate instruction. Comparisons between classes and students are being used to explore differences in progress and to ask further questions. There are still a few staff who are not sufficiently focused on students' achievements or skilled enough at monitoring and evaluation to make the changes at the pace required, however.

In the classroom, too, students are being presented with increased opportunities for self- and peer-assessment and consideration of next steps, but not in every classroom. Staff are becoming more naturally reflective and evaluative of their own practice, but again this is not universal. The school culture has not yet shifted completely to a learning-centered community for staff and students alike.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Dr. Roland N. Patterson School (CIS 229)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<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>		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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<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.	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<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		