



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Parkside Preparatory Academy

Middle School 002

**Parkside Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11226**

Principal: Adrienne Spencer

Dates of review: October 11 – 15 2007

Reviewer: Jill Bavin

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Parkside Preparatory Academy, is a middle school with 516 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 87% Black, 11% Hispanic, 0.3% White and 1.0% Asian students. The student body includes 7.6% English language learners and 20.9% special education students. Boys account for 57% and girls account for 43%. The average attendance for the school year 2006-2007 was 92.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 91% eligibility

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's extremely focused leadership has turned this school around and led to impressive improvement in students' performance.
- The extended cabinet provides an invaluable role in translating strategies for school improvement into strengths in classroom instruction and the learning environment.
- The school leadership has very high expectations of themselves, staff and students.
- The school makes extremely good use of the wealth of data in relation to the impact of its actions on student progress.
- There is an excellent balance between focusing on students' academic and their personal development.
- There is an exemplary cycle of planning, "doing" and reviewing in which teachers participate fully.
- Professional development contributes to this cycle exceptionally well because it is closely matched to both school priorities and individual teacher needs.
- Very good instruction both challenges and motivates students to do their utmost.
- The school successfully forges highly productive partnerships with other organizations to enhance the curriculum and extend students' horizons.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the use of data analysis still further to ensure that English language learners reach expected levels.
- Continue to seek further ways to involve parents in working closely with teachers and their children.
- Build on existing good practice to extend differentiation of classroom tasks and homework for students according to their level of achievement.

Part 3: Main findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is outstanding.

This principal leaves no stone unturned in her quest for continued school improvement. She leads with enormous vision, strength, energy and determination. The extended cabinet, which includes parents, is a testament to her commitment to working collaboratively. They share her passion that only the best will do for their students. The school is organized into three ability-based mini academies, or houses, for “shining stars”, “soaring stars” and “striving stars”. This organization is highly successful in enabling teachers to be assigned according to their strengths and students grouped according to their needs. Consequently, students benefit from specialist subject teaching, teachers with particular skills in teaching to their level and an extremely carefully aligned curriculum. As a result, performance is improving remarkably rapidly.

The principal and school leaders steer school improvement highly strategically. They gather and closely analyze a wealth of data about learning and instruction. They share this information throughout the school, and plan what needs to be done in remarkable detail with a high level of consultation. A crucial key to their success is the comprehensive systems in place to check the effectiveness of any action taken, on a weekly or monthly basis. Every student has an individual action plan detailing strengths, challenges and immediate goals to meet those challenges. Assistant principals work with teachers and teachers with students to review and modify these goals monthly. Unsurprisingly, the outcome of this approach is a school buzzing with high expectations and impressive increases in the achievement of all groups of students.

The inquiry team is established. It formalizes work previously undertaken by the cabinet in analyzing data, selecting students for particular focus and reviewing the impact of action taken.

This is a school of “joined up thinking”. Professional development is extremely closely aligned to school priorities, but also reflects the particular needs of individual teachers. Messages to students are entirely consistent, whether about school uniform, walking in the corridor or that “attendance is the key to learning”. Consequently, there is a culture of shared expectations, and strong mutual respect between students and between adults and students. Students with disabilities walk and work with impressive self-confidence. Students and staff share a commendable and justifiable pride in their school. It is not surprising that the school has made good progress in addressing the issues raised during the last Quality Review.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

Since the principal's appointment, there has been a meteoric rise in the percentage of students reaching the State standard. This is reflected in all groups of students. For example, there has been an increase from zero to 12.5% for special education students who have reached the expected level over the last three years. The school recognizes that there is still more to do to ensure that English language learners reach the expected standards.

The analysis of data undertaken by the principal and her cabinet is exceptionally detailed. It tracks progress over time in English language arts and math by cohort, grade and gender and for groups from different backgrounds as well as ability levels. Because the school recognizes that some ethnic groups are too small to provide statistically reliable data, they check each student's progress in more detail against their social backgrounds. An analysis of the impact of the school's recent focus on improving achievement for students in temporary housing demonstrates their success in helping a very high proportion to reach proficiency. Similarly, the school has successfully reduced the proportion of hold-over students from 98% to 19% over the last three years. Although well developed, there is still some scope for further development in data management systems and training to support teachers in the use of data over time.

The school is rigorous in analyzing trends and in comparing its work with that of other schools. Consequently, it has a good understanding of improvement in student performance over the last three years, where it wants to be and how to get there. There are both realistic and aspirational predictive goals as the school relentlessly pursues its drive for improved student performance. The inquiry team has developed out of the cabinet, formalizing work previously undertaken in analyzing the data, selecting students for particular focus and reviewing the impact of action taken.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

This area of the school's work is exceptional because it transcends every level of school activity and is very tightly monitored. Teachers and cabinet scrutinize item test analyses in order to ensure that any patterns of weakness in learning are picked up. Goals are then set for a class, a small group of students within class or for individual students through an extra program. There is a consistently strong focus on remedying clearly identified problems. The individual action plan provides the ultimate safety net, setting and checking very precise goals for each student in the school every month. These goals are measurable and expressed in terms that teachers and students understand, often using the assessment language of the program being followed. There is no hiding place for a student not making the progress expected.

Because review systems are so comprehensive and frequent the school rapidly identifies students in greatest need. For example, the school has identified a group of students referred to as “slippables”. These students have made encouraging point gains, often taking them up a level, but it is easy for them to drop back again. Consequently, extra time is allocated to discuss these students at grade and house meetings to ensure this does not happen.

Those parents who are actively involved with the school are fiercely loyal to it. As one said, “This is the ideal school.” The school goes to enormous lengths to encourage communication with all parents, for example by offering immigration workshops to get them into school. Their views are clearly sought and valued highly, often being reported at the various review meetings when student progress is discussed. Nevertheless, few parents become actively involved with their child’s learning. The school sets ambitious, quantifiable targets for attendance rates at parents’ events, although these are seldom met. However, the process means the school is clear about which events attract parents. This is an ongoing area of development for the school because they are not yet meeting their own targets.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is outstanding.

The organization of students into ability-based “houses” is a key factor in ensuring that the curriculum is extremely closely aligned to student need. There are finely tuned reading programs to meet the range of need within the group of “striving stars”, while some “shining stars” are taking their Regents examinations in grade 8. The school is determined to educate beyond preparing for State tests. The highest performing students are challenged with theme-based curricular programs. These include independent research work around the speeches of Martin Luther King.

Because student progress is reviewed so closely, there is movement between groups and across houses as needs arise. This means a special education student may join a group of “soaring stars” for math, where he is stronger. Most selected programs are highly structured with regular in-built assessment. When the school initiates a program without this facility, it devises its own means of quickly monitoring its impact. For example, the new “social and emotional” program generates data which demonstrates that the number of detentions has already reduced.

Frequent and rigorous systems for monitoring student progress mean that there is no hiding place for teachers, any more than there is for students. Teachers are held highly accountable for the progress students make in relation to their predicted goals and are inspired by the principal to, “do good to my children”. Teachers consistently share lesson aims with students, taking account of students’ different learning styles and encouraging a high degree of student participation. There are regular opportunities for students to use technology to aid learning in other subjects, especially science. These strengths combine to motivate students successfully. This has a knock-on impact on attendance such that attendance rates are well above the City average. In spite of well-developed practice in meeting students’ differing needs, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to set activities at different ability levels within a class to address all student needs and do not always differentiate homework tasks.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

Professional development is tightly aligned to school priorities such as ensuring that teachers are fully aware of current City requirements. However, the principal's maxim that, "one size doesn't fit all", drives an exceptionally effective program to improve instruction by addressing individual needs. The vast majority of teachers welcome opportunities to share best practice through meetings at house, grade or department level. They appreciate the very well developed and planned rota of inter-visitations, which have a pre-determined focus. They also welcome opportunities to visit other schools. The principal and assistant principals empower teachers, who flourish because their professionalism is valued. They grasp the autonomy that they are afforded in making curricula changes to benefit students. The ever-developing culture of professional responsibility and dialogue is driving improvement in instruction and generating highly effective learning.

The school has forged strong links with other organizations, such as the Teacher College, other local colleges, a film academy, and local hospitals. All links are carefully selected and evaluated to ensure a positive outcome for students' academic and personal development. Very successful partnerships with businesses have brought in additional funds to help pave the way to realizing the school's mission to create "lifelong learners" and "critical thinkers". These strengths clearly contribute significantly to students' enjoyment of school and their holistic education. Incidents of indiscipline are rare and swiftly addressed. There is a specific program for those students who need on-going support with conflict resolution. Its success is measured in the reduction of incidents that disturb learning. The school is an extremely well managed learning environment.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

There is an exceptionally seamless link in this school between its strategic long-term goals, its interim goals and its knowledge of students and short-term goals for their learning. This is evidenced when cabinet discuss policy and strategy, where they constantly refer to its recent past or current impact upon groups of students or individual students. A hierarchy of planning and review is underpinned by a watertight structure of frequent communication. This takes place through various regular meetings. These ensure the vital link between school priorities and action plans at department, "house" and grade level. They also ensure that the goal of enhancing student progress is maintained and constantly evaluated over short periods of time. A further strength is that it ensures a clear focus on inter-departmental subject specialisms and evaluation thus enhancing collaboration and avoiding unhelpful divisions. Whatever the forum, the discussion remains highly student focused and drives a flexible and rapid response.

The continual monitoring of student progress is second to none. Every significant aspect of school life carries with it specific and measurable goals. These reflect the school's clear understanding of its work and its determination for increasing success.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME:	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
MS 002 Parkside Preparatory Academy					X

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?					X
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?					X
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?					X
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?					X
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?					X
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1					X

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?					X
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?					X
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?					X
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2					X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?					X
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?					X
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?					X
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3					X

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?					X
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?					X
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?					X
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					X
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?					X
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?					X
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?					X
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?					X
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?					X
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?					X
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?					X
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X