



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Paul Robeson High School

High School 625

**150 Albany Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11213**

Principal: Ira Weston

Dates of review: January 9 - 11, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Angela Cook

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Paul Robeson High School has 1352 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 88% Black, 10% Hispanic, 1% American Indian and 1% White students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 59% and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 73.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 88% eligibility.

The school specializes in business and technology. It has recently undergone reorganization into four small learning academies: Finance, Information Technology, New Media Technology and Entrepreneurship. Students take their classes within their chosen academy, except where class sizes are small, for example in the advanced placement classes.

The school has a Living for the Young Family through Education (LYFE) center, which provides childcare for student parents during the school day in conjunction with parenting classes. This resource is shared with other local schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and his cabinet have a clear vision for the school, which they share effectively with staff, students and parents.
- Students are expected to aim high and aspire to 'Mastery' in their tests.
- Carefully tailored professional development for teachers enhances student learning.
- Daily advisory group meetings ensure that students feel valued and are well supported.
- Positive professional relationships between staff and students result in relaxed but purposeful classroom environments.
- Student centered learning activities engage students well and develop independent learning skills.
- Staff collaborate effectively and form a strong team, working together across the academies and subject areas.
- Information technology is used well to engage students and enhance learning.
- Interdisciplinary themes enable the academies to maximize learning opportunities for the students.
- Long-term partnerships with organizations and colleges enrich the curriculum and widen students' experiences.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that monitoring, evaluation and review are used consistently across the school to strengthen the cycle of improvement, so that plans and practices are revised speedily and the school reaches its stated goals.
- Continue to develop strategies to motivate students to attend school and arrive punctually, so that the recent slight improvement in attendance rate is consolidated and further significant improvement is achieved.
- Continue to develop teachers' confidence in the use of data to inform lesson planning, incorporating differentiation to meet the learning needs of all students.
- Extend further the collection and analysis of data so that the performance and progress of English language learners, ethnic groups and gender groups can be compared and evaluated.
- Promote further the use of assessment which informs students how they can improve.
- Continue to encourage parent participation within the school.

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 well developed.

The school has a dedicated approach to raising the achievement levels of students through its processes and its practices. The principal and his assistant principals spearhead the drive for improvement very effectively. Capacity to carry the vision forward is built up across the staff through a well-focused professional development program. The strong, collaborative, staff team turns plans into actions. It is at the classroom level where much diagnostic assessment of data and reflection on practice takes place, resulting in instruction that engage students well. The school uses data well to monitor student performance as a whole and to set developmental goals to improve student outcomes. However, not all groups of students have their progress monitored and evaluated with the same rigor, and therefore the school does not amend plans speedily for some to reflect the needs of some students.

Since the last review the school has reorganized in order to develop small learning communities for its students. The academy structure enables teachers to know their students well and to work together across subject areas, creating interdisciplinary themes. The introduction of student advisories fully supports the individualized approach to learning. Each academy has also established an inquiry team, but, although the groups of students whose academic progress will be evaluated have been selected, this development is still in its early stages.

The school has made good progress in the majority of areas for improvement identified by the last review, by implementing well-conceived, detailed procedures and plans, including careful attention to professional development. However, although monitoring and review, has been well addressed generally, evaluation and review are not yet consistently seen as part of the cycle for improvement across the school. The rate of attendance remains low despite the school's efforts.

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

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 student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The recent reorganization of the school into smaller learning academies has enabled the development of good systems to collect pertinent data in a systematic way for the directors of the academies. Senior leaders demonstrate an acute awareness of the

importance of robust structures and well-developed systems for this collection. Teachers keep detailed assessment data from their lessons and assignments, which they submit to the directors regularly. In this way, school leaders are provided with a clear overview of the performance and progress across subject areas, grades and academies, but are also able to register the performance of each individual student. The principal conducts a survey of alternative forms of data that have been used to supplement the statistical information, in order to clarify how this is applied across the school. Protocols support the robust collection of data. For example, the cabinet gathered a significant amount of focused information about instruction and learning across the classes during their learning walks, visiting 128 classes over two days. This exercise enabled the identification of areas for professional development. The principal pursues a variety of different approaches when making comparisons with similar schools and viewing trends over time. Data is well used to monitor the progress of special education students, ensuring that these students are fully supported when they move into collaborative team teaching classes, and ultimately to be well prepared for the workplace.

Data is less effectively generated in classes for English language learners, although data from City tests is used to monitor performance. Little data is gathered to analyze the performance and progress of students of different ethnic groups or to make comparisons by gender.

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 well developed.

The cabinet works very effectively as a team to establish the goals and objectives for the school, which it translates into clear action plans for each subject. These plans impact positively on every student and all members of staff. Teachers use “level alike” meetings to chart the next steps for their students. Logs of these meetings are shared so that there is a common understanding across subject areas. The overriding goal is to achieve 80% “Mastery” This is proclaimed across the school on big banners and is seen in every classroom. These high expectations are disseminated across the school community, and all know that merely passing is not good enough. Staff disaggregate data to identify those students whose academic work requires improvement, and a variety of effective strategies and support packages are tailor-made to assist them. Students are responsible for managing their progress themselves, though parents are strongly urged to become involved to provide additional support. Parents are appreciative of the open dialogue they have with the school. One parent cited a phone call which informed her of her daughter’s good progress. However, some parents are still diffident about being involved with their children’s schooling, saying that this is the teachers’ domain.

The school informs students and their parents about the progress being made regularly. Students know their long-term goals, but many are not aware of short-term targets. Although some checking of work clearly shares what students need to do to improve, not all students have the necessary rubrics in their books to support their development. Similarly, not all feedback is sufficiently formative to enable students to understand fully what they must do to make their work better.

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 well developed.

The curriculum is used to generate good data which teachers use diagnostically to assess their students' knowledge and understanding. Currently, not all staff apply differentiation consistently, though some good examples were observed. In a math lesson students' made good progress because the teacher thoughtfully selected tasks according to the students' preferred learning style, so that questions could be answered using different routes, including one for kinesthetic learners.

Teachers facilitate personalized learning through a computer program to differentiate questions for their students. Students have good access to computers to answer the questions, thereby extending their learning. Data gathered by the software indicates that students are taking advantage of the opportunities offered. Student-centered strategies in lessons help to engage and motivate the learners, supporting them to develop independent learning skills. Classrooms are bright and interesting, with attractive displays of students' work. "Through lines" which link learning across classes, and the use of "essential questions" to promote debate, are two ways in which the school is putting good theory into practice.

Good professional relationships between teachers and students result in positive classroom environments. A good range of clubs, such as a gospel choir and the Bailey's Café Theatre Troupe, enhance the curriculum, and trips arranged with partnership organizations and colleges enable students to learn away from the classroom. The academy directors, using carefully monitored students' grades, hold teachers responsible for their classes' progress.

The school is acutely aware that attendance and punctuality require improvement, and that it has made only limited progress in these areas since the last review. The outcomes of strategies to address these, such as the development of small learning communities, have yet to show a result.

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 well developed.

The school has dedicated much time and effort into building capacity through well-focused, high-quality staff development, in order to raise the achievement of its students and to meet the school's goals for improvement. The plans indicate that staff will be further supported in utilizing data to differentiate instruction so that all students' learning can be extended. This was an area identified at the last review as needing improvement. Although the full impact of this drive is still to be seen, it is the breadth of data gathering carried out to inform the professional development, and the attention to detail which make this area well developed. The appointment of a professional team to design and deliver the program over a year is indicative of the high priority placed on this by the school. Teachers' views were canvassed and all needs, including those of the cabinet, are catered

for by differentiated developmental activities. Regular monitoring through classroom observations and scrutiny of work and data ensures that the additional input is focused well.

The strong staff team appreciates the time provided during the school day for them to work together, planning, sharing good practice, observing each other's instruction and supporting each other. A good induction program enables new teachers to be well supported. Good links with colleges and outstanding long term partnerships with organizations such as Citigroup Corporate and Investment Banking, have resulted in an enrichment of the curriculum and excellent opportunities for students and staff to broaden their experiences.

Over 70 student advisory groups were established at the same time as the school's reorganization. These capitalize on the advantages of small personal learning communities. Detailed planning and effective monitoring and review processes have resulted in a very positive response to this initiative. Students say they have developed very good relationships with their advisors, some of whom are invited to join the students in social activities after school. Guidance counselors attached to specific academies are well placed to provide valuable student support. Clear procedures and well-planned working practices across the academies promote good behavior. There has been a recent reduction in the number of incidents and behavior is good in class.

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 proficient.

The school has instituted good processes for using the information from its data to plan for the continued improvement of student achievement levels, but these are not yet consistently applied in all areas. The school's key plans for achieving its goals are well defined, with success criteria set within a timeframe. This enables plans to be revised speedily to meet changing needs. However, not all the ensuing action plans mirror the same close attention to these details. Where clearly defined success criteria and timelines are absent, the impact of the action and its evaluation is less effective. Additionally, where there is a time lag between completing an action point in the plans and reviewing its effectiveness in terms of raising student achievement levels, the momentum of the improvement cycle is lost. Similarly, where insufficient interim data is collected about particular groups of students, any end of year evaluation of the effectiveness of strategies used lacks currency.

The school carefully evaluates the impact of its strategic decisions, but does not immediately seek to link cause and effect, delaying until long term trends are established. In order to meet its objective to improve the lower grades levels awarded in global studies and American history, the school is proactively trialing and evaluating different approaches to scheduling, so that students have the best opportunity to succeed. The good integration between action plans and professional development provides a clear whole school approach to attaining the goals of raising achievement. By its continued development of reflective practitioners who are able to respond quickly to the changing needs of the students, the school plans to improve effectively the learning experiences for all.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Paul Robeson High School	△	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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	

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped