



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Isobel Rooney School

Middle School 080

**149 East Mosholu Parkway
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Lovey Mazique-Rivera

Dates of review: May 19 - 20, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Alexander Ramos

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Isobel Rooney School is a middle school with 754 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 17% Black, 69% Hispanic, 5% White, 1% American Indian, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 86.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 77% eligibility.

The building was recently enlarged to accommodate another school. Both schools share common spaces including the yard, cafeteria, and auditorium.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Administration has developed meticulous systems to collect and analyze data.
- The principal and assistant principals have effectively reflected on their practices and implemented changes to influence achievement.
- The principal consistently conveys high expectations to students and staff.
- The school has established effectual relationships with parents and the school community that support student learning.
- Collaborative teamwork and regular meetings enable teachers to reflect on their practices and share ideas and effective teaching strategies.
- Teachers use a wealth of assessment information effectively to identify each student's next learning steps and provide effective feedback.
- The school plans and organizes professional development that meets the needs of the school and of individual teachers successfully.
- Administration uses a consistent system to conduct formal observations that promote the schools' goals and improve instruction.
- The school uses its budget effectively, and ensures staffing and scheduling decisions promote students' achievement, progress and social development.

What the school needs to improve

- Make effective use of peer school data to establish benchmarks for goal setting and monitoring of student performance.
- Make whole-school goal setting more detailed and measurable to provide an evaluation of student progress.
- Ensure that teachers set specific goals for individuals and groups of students to address established priority needs.
- Extend differentiation practices to ensure consistency across all classes.
- Explore opportunities to offer expanded arts programs for students.
- Further refine monitoring procedures to facilitate effective analysis and evaluation of overall school goals.

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 proficient.

The principal has a clear vision and is highly committed to creating a learning community where all students achieve high academic standards and realize their potential. She has established an inviting and caring environment where students feel secure and challenged. The “mini schools” established last year effectively support students’ social and academic development. The focus on using students’ experiential knowledge to improve the curriculum and provide focused support has been successful, as students are fully engaged in lessons and make good progress. The principal and her assistants work tirelessly to ensure instruction improves and teachers are raising student achievement. There are many examples of good instructional practice throughout the school, however, they are still not consistently applied across all classrooms; challenges still exist that require attention. The school has also made strides in improving programs for special needs students as evidenced by strong engagement in some classes. Leaders acknowledge the need for further improvements.

Caring teachers and a supportive guidance program are strong features of the school. Staff members build upon these relationships to encourage good student performance and achievement. This is particularly beneficial for struggling students and the progress of these students increased last year in English language arts.

Strong, collaborative teacher meetings ensure that efforts to raise achievement are realized through regular content area discussions. At these meetings, led by assistant principals and supported by coaches, teachers review student interim assessment results and adjust curriculum planning based on needs revealed by the data. Professional development is well matched to individual needs of teachers and the school’s objectives. The school has recently begun to implement effective opportunities to observe colleagues teach across subjects and disciplines. This includes video taping lessons that teachers watch and discuss in team meetings to benefit the development of effective teaching practices. The school has rigorously addressed the issues raised in the last Quality Review. Effective practices are now in place to collect data at regular intervals through standards based interim assessments. Leaders and teachers usefully analyze and interpret data at team meetings. While inconsistencies remain, data has begun to establish effective differentiation practice in classrooms. Goal setting practices and the data collection systems, however, still require more attention as the systems in place do not always allow for effective analysis. The school has high expectations for student outcomes and effectively shares these with students and parents. Parents support the changes that have occurred during the current principal’s tenure. The inquiry team meets regularly to identify and implement strategies that improve learning outcomes for struggling students.

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 well developed.

The school collects and thoroughly analyzes an abundance of data, including State assessments, interim assessments, and student profiles in order to gauge progress. This provides the principal and faculty with an accurate picture of each student's achievements and it allows the school to compare all aspects of its performance annually. In addition, leaders evaluate relevant data for all gender, ethnic and other groups of students. Baseline data followed by unit tests in all core subject areas provide teachers with more information about the learning needs of each group of students.

Data for English language learners and special education students is used successfully to raise their performance. The school assesses the progress of English language learners through second language assessment tests, as well as assessments developed by the school, based on the standards from the student's country of origin. This data is used to provide appropriate support depending upon a student's level of English proficiency. In addition, the school's analysis of data ensures very good support for a large population of special education students. This comes through a combination of focused teaching in self-contained classes, effectual resource room services and interventions services designed to meet the varying needs of this population. Student's individual education plans provide an effective source of data to understand the needs of special education students. Teachers use data consistently at classroom level to improve student achievement. The school is in the process of measuring its performance against similar schools; however, teachers do undertake focused visits to peer schools to observe good practices and are expected to implement the practices in their own classrooms. The school has implemented systems to ensure teachers utilize data to inform instruction and have provided training to teachers to effectively utilize the practices introduced.

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 proficient.

Administration and teachers collaboratively discuss student progress, set goals and establish plans to improve the performance of each student, class and grade level. In addition, subject teams analyze data to create curriculum goals. Student goals are not yet sufficiently detailed or measurable to check student progress or provide useful evaluations for comparisons among classes and groups of students. However, the school vigorously addresses the achievement of students in greatest need, as evidenced by extensive progress by these groups. Teachers utilize effective instructional interventions to address this population of students. A combination of well researched intervention programs and a pull out intervention model has lead to improved achievement among students.

The school shares its goals productively with the school community through faculty meetings and regularly scheduled team meetings. This has resulted in strong support from an eager and dedicated staff. High expectations are conveyed to students and staff as evidenced by the pride exhibited by parents, students, and staff in their school. One

student reported, “The principal is passionate and pushes us to do our best”. Through conferencing, teachers set goals with individual students, which allows for effective student ownership of their learning. Through the analysis of assessment data the school has also implemented effective grouping to allow teachers to work with small groups that require special attention.

The school has established numerous ways of communicating with parents, including regular progress reports in addition to report cards, a website with extensive information for parents and regular meetings arranged through the parent association. The school has an open door policy that allows parents to communicate regularly with teachers about the progress students are making and to obtain information that may assist in student achievement. Parents report that access to teachers is very good and that they are responsive to their needs.

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.

Data is used meticulously to develop an instructional program that meets school goals and students’ needs. The program was designed collaboratively and includes units of study that take into account students’ prior understanding and learning styles. The core curriculum includes end of unit assessments that allow teachers to monitor student attainment of grade-appropriate standards. Acuity assessment data is effectually utilized to inform differentiation practices. The school houses a performing arts “mini-school” that includes visual arts and instrumental music. All incoming grade 6 students are introduced to each of the art classes. They may then choose to become a part of the performing arts academy where art is a fully integrated aspect of the units of study. However, students in other mini-schools have limited opportunities to pursue any interest in the arts once they enter the 7th grade.

The focus on the principles of learning has developed good practices as evidenced by the consistency of instructional practice across classrooms. This has created a seamless curricular approach that engages students and allows them to progress in an environment of mutual respect. Students report that “teachers are very open and give up their free time to help us when we need it”. The use of data to plan and provide differentiated instruction has become more effective and it is evident in most classes. The principal acknowledges that this work still requires further attention. She equally shows the determination to ensure all teachers are able to utilize data effectively to engage and challenge students.

School leaders hold teachers accountable for their students’ success in learning through effective supervisory practice, individual teacher goal-setting conferences, and expressing high expectations during department and staff conferences. The school uses data to make strategic budgeting, scheduling, and staffing decisions to ensure that all resources are available to address student social and academic needs. This has involved hiring an additional guidance counselor and grade advisors for each of the three mini schools. They help to provide students with a supportive and safe learning environment that is conducive to learning. In addition, there is a clear environment of mutual respect among staff and students and a calm and courteous tone throughout the building. The school’s new systems to monitor and improve attendance have been very effective as shown by an increase from the previous year.

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.

Professional development meets school goals and the needs of individual teachers successfully. The principal and the administrative team effectively use frequent observations and provide relevant feedback within 48 hours, to plan for improving instruction and to inform professional development decisions. Through a structured formal observation practice administration ensures consistency of feedback from all supervisors. They also utilize learning walks where administrators and coaches observe instruction and use the information collected to inform planning. Teachers report that they use intervisitations into colleague's classrooms to observe good practices and that they have recently begun to video tape their own lessons to share during team meetings. The strong emphasis on teacher development has resulted in improved instructional practices and is raising student achievement. New teachers are also supported through effective mentoring and help from supervisors. Professional learning also occurs during grade and subject meetings where teachers share ideas discuss and analyze pertinent data and review plans to improve instruction. Outside support through the school's support organization is used regularly to provide additional professional development in other areas of need.

Effective guidance services offer students strong support in the form of academic intervention counseling that includes social emotional development through in-house counseling groups, individual conferencing and focused advisories that support the schools excellent learning environment. Links with a range of external partners are fully exploited to enhance the students' academic and personal development.

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.

Procedures to monitor and revise goals and plans are adequate. Leaders monitor student progress through the administration of interim assessments every four to six weeks in all core subject areas. In addition, they utilized Acuity periodic assessments in English language arts and math to further monitor student's attainment of grade level appropriate skills. Monitoring practices are in the beginning stages, currently lack interim goals and require further development to allow for class, grade, and subgroup analysis based on established benchmarks. Monitoring practices, however, do allow for the revision of instructional units, guide the planning of interventions, help the school to revise curriculum maps and further develop uniform assessments to address the needs of students. Teachers regularly analyze the outcomes of students' work to monitor the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students. Teachers also utilize interim assessments effectively to help students set individual goals, thereby providing them with useful methods for monitoring their own progress. Teachers also regularly provide effective feedback through the use of student portfolios that help them take charge of their learning and monitor their own progress. Administration collects this monitoring information from teachers, which is used to inform future goals. The principal's goals for the future development of the school are clear and she implements changes effectively to realize her vision.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Isobel Rooney School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	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 rigorous, 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 and tardiness?				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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				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