

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

The Michael Friedsam School

Elementary School 214

**2944 Pitkin Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Patricia Tubridy

Dates of review: February 9 - 10, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Timothy Behr

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Michael Friedsam School is an elementary school with 1,064 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 21% Black, 37% Hispanic, 2% White, 39% Asian and 1% American Indian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 91.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Michael Friedsam School is a large and respected learning institution. Faculty and parents support the principal's vision, especially her expectations of students progressing both academically and socially. This is reflected throughout the school by exhibition boards, classroom instruction, administrators, teachers, and parents referencing common school improvement objectives. The majority of students made at least one year's progress in English language arts and math during the academic year 2007-2008. The administration is striving to build upon the school's strengths to further develop instructional practices and maintain the rate of progress made by students.

The collection of data is established and teachers use it well to inform instruction and to organize students for additional assistance. The ARIS system enables teachers to procure information regarding students' background as well as their academic strengths and weaknesses. Acuity provides teachers with data to identify trends in achievement in grades 3 through 5. Dibels support teachers in the early childhood grades to set measurable goals for students. Collaboration is strong across the school. Common preparation time enables teachers to work within and across grades to improve achievement. However, the school recognizes the need to formalize planning and interim goal setting to measure whole school and subgroup performance in core subjects and to make comparisons with similar schools in order to improve student achievement.

The Comprehensive Educational Plan is developed collaboratively and data informed to establish SMART goals for overall school improvement. Action plans reflective of students' results on standardized and formative tests are implemented to inform grade planning and classroom instruction regarding identified trends. However, differentiated instruction is not yet consistent in all classrooms. The inquiry team analyzes data effectively which is shared across the school to influence instruction and student achievement. The principal acknowledges that the school has not given a sharp focus to the setting of interim targets for students as they work towards their end-of-year goals.

Parents state that the school is safe, the staff respects their children, and the school consistently communicates with them regarding school matters. They appreciate the opportunities to become part of the learning process. Workshops support their learning about the curriculum. Everyone involved is dedicated to the most positive results for every student.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Faculty and parents wholeheartedly support the principal's vision, especially her expectations of children progressing academically and socially.
- The inquiry team is very effective in promoting the interpretation and use of data to track student progress and to inform instruction and teacher assignments.
- The Comprehensive Educational Plan is a living document that is developed collaboratively, evaluates relevant data and is updated regularly to support the school's academic initiatives to improve student results.
- The principal makes astute and creative use of the budget with regards to staffing and scheduling opportunities that are making a positive impact on student achievement.
- Professional development is comprehensive and closely targeted on the school's priorities for further improving student outcomes.
- Parents speak highly of the school, the information they receive, and the opportunities to be part of the educational process.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish a plan to set interim goals and timeframes for subgroups across classes and grades and in relation to achievement and the curriculum in order to promote exemplary gains.
- Ensure that all teachers plan differentiated instruction that addresses the varied learning needs of individual students and groups.
- Refine decisions in curriculum planning to support and track student performance in core subject areas.
- Establish school-wide systems for individual goal setting with benchmarks in all subjects to monitor progress throughout the year and evaluate outcomes.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The administration at Michael Friedsam collects a wide variety of formative and summative data on the students. The principal and assistant principals are assigned specific grades and content areas which assists all teachers in having a strong understanding of the student progress at individual, classroom, and grade level. This organizational strategy is working well as evidenced by the school's Progress Report where the majority of students are making one year of academic progress. Teachers maintain comprehensive assessment binders for students that are supplemented on a regular basis with current work. This extensive database informs common planning, is shared with colleagues, and enables teachers to evaluate individual student progress during the year. The data specialist provides all teachers with ongoing effective training in understanding systems and the range of data collected, especially in the customizing of the ARIS Inquiry Target Tool to maximize and highlight trends in data that is used well to improve classroom instruction. The school is using periodic assessment materials to help and support teachers in their classroom planning. These materials include strategies to analyze the progress of their students to continue to improve student achievement. This is having a positive effect and the number of students achieving the higher levels is increasing yearly.

Teachers and the administration are looking closely at the performance and progress of student subgroups to enhance their ability to make exemplary proficiency gains. The school has focused successfully on the needs of its large immigrant population. However, the analysis of data regarding learning outcomes for special education students, English language learners, and different ethnic groups has lacked sufficient depth. Consequently, to encourage improvement in student learning, teachers have moved between grade groups and received valuable professional development to enhance their skills and knowledge.

The school successfully shares its expectations and its motto, "It's Cool to be Smart, It's Cool to Care," regarding student performance, progress, and attendance with the community. It does this through meetings, workshops, newsletters, house visits, and the telephone. The school utilizes these tools effectively to provide information to parents and to listen to their views. To enhance attendance figures throughout the school, a recently implemented incentive program will acknowledge and reward classes and students with the highest percentage of attendance. Students state that they love coming to school and monthly attendance rates are on the rise. Teachers share this information with students during conferencing and with parents during formal and informal meetings.

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.

School leaders provide teachers with meaningful formative and summative student data on a regular basis that is reviewed during common planning and successfully incorporated into classroom lessons to improve student performance. At the common planning meetings, teachers use student, formative, summative and curriculum information to develop their lesson plans together and to consider their next joint steps. However, not all teachers make full use of data and the extensive resources available to differentiate instruction to address each student’s learning needs.

The school makes exemplary use of the Comprehensive Educational Plan by creating action plans, which outline ways to promote student learning. SMART goals have been collaboratively developed to identify incremental objectives in English language arts and math for students in grades 3 through 5. Focus area goals support this initiative by identifying specific needs of pedagogues and putting in place appropriate teaching strategies and enrichment programs to enhance student learning. Additionally, the school has structured a three times a week 50 minute extended day program in the afternoon, which has good student attendance and incorporates strategies for improving student learning for its at-risk students. This academic strategy incorporates pre and post assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of this program. Although learning goals are shared with the staff at faculty conferences and at common planning meetings, it is not an embedded practice for all core subject areas.

The school keeps parents well informed through formal and informal conferences. An orientation at the beginning of the school year entitled “Meet the Teacher Night” gives parents the opportunity to learn about the goals and objectives for each grade. This helps to ensure that information is given about what levels students are expected to achieve. The school keeps parents well informed about their child’s progress via written notification and telephone calls at any time during the year. Parents speak highly of the school and appreciate the information they receive and the opportunity to be part of the educational process. Students talk about how well they are doing and what they can do to get better grades.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school is proud of having a high-quality curriculum that celebrates and develops the varied talents of all students. As a result of data analysis, the school will expand its core knowledge curriculum to grades 4 and 5 next year. The course of study has lots of diversity and makes a distinct contribution to how well students progress. This curriculum supports the acquisition of prior knowledge, scaffolding and spiraling learning in most content areas to improve student outcomes.

Common planning meetings in kindergarten through grade 3 enables staff members to learn from each other, which accelerates curriculum' development by the sharing of best practices. This has ensured consistency across the lower grades as well as alignment with most core subject requirements. The result is a print-rich environment that demonstrates learning across subjects providing students with opportunities to showcase their skills. It is evident throughout the school that students are confident, articulate and are able to take responsibility for their learning.

The school has begun to consider the development of curriculum maps to enhance lesson and unit planning in core subjects. The administration and data specialist support teachers in using data to drive instruction that meets students' needs. As a result, teachers' ability to differentiate instruction has improved, although the school realizes that differentiation of instruction needs to occur on a more consistent basis throughout all core subject areas.

The analysis of achievement data directly informs staffing and scheduling decisions. As a result of good budgeting, reduced-size classes in grades 4 and 5 are supporting improved student achievement. The school actively identifies funding sources and consistently applies for supportive grants to ensure that positive learning opportunities are available to all students. The principal looks at staffing and is very careful in the selection of all staff to ensure they support the focus of a respectful and safe environment to promote student learning.

There are excellent levels of trust and respect between staff members and students, which leads to a secure and nurturing learning environment. A general equivalency diploma class ensures that the school supports adult learning and personal growth to engage parents in the educational process.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The principal and assistant principals formally and informally observe teachers and are in classrooms daily and provide extremely constructive feedback. Teachers take good account of this feedback and implement effectively the information they receive during professional development. Additionally, teachers work together collaboratively and visit each other's classrooms to successfully share best practices and to develop good ideas. New teachers receive good support from mentors as well as from all their colleagues in the grade to improve their understanding of the core curriculum.

The work of the inquiry team is excellent. They interpret data effectively and use it as their central point to investigate the barriers to learning for the lowest performing students. Their attention to detail and precise work takes into account the views of the administration, their colleagues and the students themselves. They analyze discrepancies in data and review important factors effecting learning for each inquiry team student. This activity assists in identifying each student's learning style, and in developing good practice. The team's work is successfully helping to identify the reasons that hinder lower achieving students from making progress and to develop valuable strategies to improve learning.

The examination of school-wide data and its relation to student success is the basis for professional development. Often external consultants will be engaged to lead in the development of activities and this has had the effect of bringing greater cohesion to students' learning and the ability of the teachers to improve their delivery of instruction.

The extra curricular activities provide another dimension to learning and students greatly enjoy the opportunities. Students can participate in ballet, ballroom dancing, and music. Fifth graders can participate in a swimming program to enhance school involvement and reward good behavior. The school has participated in Penny Harvest and food drives to support students' personal growth and community awareness. The school has increased technology to support student learning. Tickets to Read and V-Math are programs used by the majority of students. The interactive programs enable students to work at their own levels. Therefore, work can be completed after school or on weekends with or without parental involvement to enhance the home and school connection and the message that practice makes perfect. As a parent stated, "The school is excellent! It's where you want to be."

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 a good understanding of its strengths and areas for growth because of the consistent self-evaluation linked to the analysis of all relevant data. The entire school community is involved in identifying goals and contributing to the school's plans to support improvement. However, these plans do not always include interim benchmarks. This makes tracking progress towards the attainment and success of strategic goals difficult. The principal is aware that the interim goals set for student outcomes need to be time limited and be measurable.

The school consistently uses periodic assessment and other diagnostic tools, such as Dibels and Read 180, to measure progress towards meeting goals for improving the achievement of all students. Student portfolios are providing very useful information to guide teachers in their instruction. The work of the inquiry team exemplifies these practices.

The principal and her administrative team provide powerful and inspirational leadership as they continue to expand their vision for the future development of the school in a highly collaborative student-centered environment. Parents support the school in its innovative approaches to teaching and learning, including the increasing use of technology. Curriculum developments are addressing this already through SMARTboards, Dibels, and the programs Ticket to Read and V Math to refine instruction even further to improve the achievement of all. Parents also value the ways in which the school works at sustaining the community spirit.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Michael Friedsam School	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				X
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?				X
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DY0, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?				X
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X

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

<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?				X
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed