



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

**Quality Review Report  
Office of Accountability  
2008-2009**

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**The Rafael Cordero y Molina School**

**Middle School 302**

**350 Linwood Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11208**

**Principal: Lisa Linder**

**Dates of review: March 16-17, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Rudolph Rupnarain**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Rafael Cordero y Molina is a middle school with 1002 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 33% Black, 61% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% American Indian, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 88.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 95% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

The principal has successfully established structured learning environments within the school. She has worked hard to create a more open and collaborative system with staff and students that has boosted teacher morale and respect among the school community. Parents are extremely appreciative of her efforts and believe that she and her staff are making a positive impact on their children academic and social development.

School administration and teachers collect and analyze a wide range of data across subjects and grades to inform planning and instruction. However plans infrequently define interim measures of progress and students' subject goals lacked consistent alignment to identified learning needs across all core subjects. Some instruction is primarily whole class and teacher-directed and does not adequately accommodate the specific learning needs of the individual students. There are good lines of communication between home and school to inform parents of students' progress. Plans are in place to improve this process by revising the interim progress report to include progress on all subject areas and next steps required. While there are no specific individual development plans for teachers' professional development, teachers are well supported by their administrators, coaches, and professional development courses offered through their Learning Support Organization.

Students benefit from a broad, rich standards-based curriculum. The school offer Regents courses in integrated algebra and earth science to their higher performing students during the day and on Saturdays while their lower performing students are supported through a targeted after school academic intervention program. All students can choose from a wide array of elective courses such as drama, band, African drumming, sign language, robotics and chess. Administrators are keenly aware of what is required to support learning. Extensive and effective academic, social, and emotional support for students and their families are provided in house and supplemented through partnerships developed with community based organizations. The school uses its resources well to enhance the learning opportunities of students.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- A good and respectful school tone and numerous partnerships with community based organizations support the academic and personal growth of the students well.
- The school's curriculum gives students extensive opportunities for students to participate in all core subjects including the arts during the day program as well as after school and Saturdays to provide a continuum of learning for students.
- Staff has multiple opportunities for collaboration to reflect upon how they teach and how well their students are performing.
- The school generates a wide range of data through formal and authentic assessments so that staff can closely track the progress of each student.
- Support services are an integral part of the school and effectively support the social and emotional needs of students and families.
- The principal and staff work hard to sustain effective partnerships with families and students and keep them well informed about what their children are working towards and how families can help them.

### What the school needs to improve

- Build upon existing good practice to ensure that the evaluation of student progress and the determination of learning goals are evident for all core subjects in order to create comprehensive student profile of achievement.
- Continue to focus on differentiation, particularly in terms of varying the activities provided in order to enhance and deepen learning and challenge all students.
- Ensure there is greater consistency in teachers' responses to all student work, to reflect level of performance, provide guiding comments and to convey next steps.
- Ensure the observation of teaching by the administration is consistent across all grade and content area in delivering rigorous instruction.

## 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 school collects and uses a wide range of data to understand the needs of individual students and groups. In addition to using historical data, the school uses a baseline assessment for all students at the beginning of the academic year. The data collected is shared with the staff at common planning and at grade meetings. Each teacher has a data binder that contains information on individual students from many sources such as results from the baseline test, Acuity assessments and other authentic assessments. Close analysis by school leaders revealed slippage in performance levels for high achieving students and inadequate gains for special education students and English language learners in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. As a result, the school has increased the number of Regents classes offered in mathematics and earth science to improve academic rigor and establish homogenous grouping to allow for more targeted instruction for all students. The work of the two inquiry teams, which focus on mathematics instruction and special education students, further exemplifies how data analysis aids the identification of strengths and areas for improvement for specific groups of students. Although the school's initial assessments focused primarily in English language arts and mathematics, in most cases the school also uses data from the science and social studies to assess student progress. However, this is not yet consistent practice in all subjects and grades throughout the school.

The school effectively analyzes the data to identify the achievement and progress of all subgroups in English language arts, mathematics, social studies and science but does not yet ensure that there is greater consistency throughout the school in monitoring individual students' progress. The school supports its English language learners through the addition of several transitional bilingual classes resulting in more students attaining intermediate and advance level status in the NYSESLAT test. Special education students; a subgroup that is the focus of the inquiry team has significantly underperformed the rest of the school in mathematics and are encouraged to attend the Beacon and 21<sup>st</sup> century after school program to receive intervention services. The school has increased their focus on attendance by hiring three family assistants and a school aide to increase student outreach and family support services. The school is now on track to improve attendance from 88.9% to 90%.

The school has good communication links with parents and encourages active involvement in their children's education. As a result, parents are very appreciative of the safe and caring learning environment established in the school and value the various programs and opportunities that are offered during the day and after school programs as evident by the substantial increase in number of parents attending monthly students' progress 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.**

The Comprehensive Educational Plan which is closely aligned with the overall school goal was developed through a collaborative process by the entire school community. The school sets rigorous and measurable goals for English language arts, math, social studies, and science. The leadership team monitors and revises these at regular intervals throughout the year. However, the school has yet to formalize learning goals for individual students across all subjects consistently to ensure they make good progress.

Some students are able to articulate their goals and the steps needed to achieve them. In some classes, students use self-assessment to monitor their performance and effectively plan their next steps. However, this good practice is not consistent throughout the school. Rigorous assessments and regular conferencing are not sufficiently systemized across the entire school to ensure that most students are on track to attain their goals.

Parents receive regular formal updates on their children’s progress through report cards and interim progress report and informal updates by notes, telephone calls, and one-on-one conversation with school faculty. The school arranges monthly workshops in addition to parent teacher conferences for parents to meet with teachers to discuss their children’s progress. As a result, parents have a clear understanding of school wide goals and the school’s high expectations for academic and personal success of their children. The school intends to revise the interim progress report to accurately reflect individual learning goals for all students with greater specificity, such as detailing the precise strands and strategies students have achieved and what they need to work on in all core subjects.

**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.**

School leaders have placed special emphasis on ensuring standards-based instruction in all subjects that are closely aligned to State and City standards. Homogeneous student placements based on their prior year achievements, provide for an effective range of challenge to meet the needs of high achieving students by offering them Regent’s courses in integrated algebra and earth science. The school also provides an extensive after school program through the sponsorship of Beacon and 21<sup>st</sup> Century to support struggling students.

Teachers are accountable for the quality of their instruction but there is inconsistency of practice in individual classrooms. Most staff used a limited range of teaching strategies, focusing primarily on whole class instruction with sporadic independent or differentiated work. The school uses an effective range of assessment systems and rubrics to track students’ progress toward their learning goals but there is inconsistency in practice across the school. In some classrooms, teachers used an assessment rubric of 1-4 to

evaluate student work whereas in other classrooms the words, “very good”, and “good”, as well as percentiles are evident.

The administration effectively uses the budget to promote the learning needs of students and staff. This year teachers’ schedule was adjusted to provide for common planning time for grade and content area meetings to monitor and evaluate students’ progress on the various interim assessments and engage in reflective pedagogical practices through inter-visitation and learning walks conducted throughout the school year. The school and its classrooms are very well resourced. Students learn in a respectful purposeful environment. The school has very clear behavioral expectation that has resulted in a decrease in the number of overall students’ suspensions from last year. Attendance continues to be a priority with the hiring of three family assistants and a school aide to increase outreach services along with an incentive program using the “Cordero” dollars to effectively reward students with improved attendance.

**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 proficient.**

The principal and assistant principals provide regular feedback to teachers through formal and informal observations of teaching. The school has created a teachers’ professional development plan for the entire year. However, the lack of detailed professional development plans for each teacher inhibits the leaderships’ capacity to fully individualize support that is customized to each teacher’s needs. Nonetheless, the school does provide for ample access to content specific professional development that is provided by external staff developers and its Learning Support Organization. Effective structures and opportunities for teacher collaboration and shared decision-making are provided through regular grade and academic departmental meetings, faculty conferences, Inquiry Team meetings, and school leadership team meetings. Formal and informal sharing of expertise and practices across subjects and among colleagues through inter-visitation has promoted increase opportunities for reflection about professional practice, although this is not strongly evident across the grades in the areas assessments rubrics, teacher feedback to students, and differentiated teaching strategies across all curriculum areas.

Students and their families are beneficiaries of an organized system of supports for academic, social, emotional and personal development. Each grade has its own assistant principal, guidance counselor/social worker, dean and family worker. The creation of this team has provided increased opportunities for collaboration among the staff within each grade to promote effective staff development that focuses on individual student engagement and achievement as well as increase personalization and differentiation of individual students’ needs. Numerous partnerships provide supplemental academic and personal supports as well as broad opportunities for enrichment. The Beacon program provides peer mediation, mental health, sports and arts during the day as well as well as after-school; the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program is a grant based program where all students have the following services available: academic enrichment, a wide array of activities such as – fitness, basketball skills development and dance. IS 302 offers peer mediation during the day. Beacon is a community based organization housed in IS 302 that provides a number of after school activities for all students.

**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.**

Some, but not all school plans contain interim goals and time frames necessary to monitor and guide progress towards improvements. For instance, both the Comprehensive Educational Plan and Principal's Performance Review clearly reflect the school's overall vision and its desired outcomes. However, there is a lack of specific short-term measures to determine whether the school is making sufficient progress towards the precisely predefined annual goals. School leaders and teachers have effective systems in place to collect and examine relevant data for individuals in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies in all classes and grades. Acuity interim assessment, marking periods and mid-marking periods are primarily used for progress monitoring for all students and sub-groups. However, the school's action plans do not yet include timeframes and interim goals that would allow the school to make systematic and regular checks on progress and take remedial action where necessary.

The collaborative discussion within the school based on both historical and emerging data effectively promote strategic decision making. The emphasis on improving math instruction and performance of special education students which is the focus of the two inquiry teams this year is a clear result that emerged from these discussions. While it is too early to evaluate the impact of this initiative, there is clear evidence of an emphasis in mathematics instruction to prevent slippage among high achievers by offering additional Regent's classes in integrated algebra. Overall, the vision of the principal and administrative team, clearly aimed at accelerating student learning, is well understood by students, teachers and parents and the drive to improve students' outcomes is a shared vision for the entire school community.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Rafael Cordero &amp; Molina School</b>	△	➤	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<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?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<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?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?		<b>X</b>		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

### 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, DYQ, 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.

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	▷	✓	+			
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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	▷	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>