



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Paul Robeson High School

High School 625

**150 Albany Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11213**

Principal: Ira Weston

Dates of review: November 24 - 25, 2008

Lead Reviewer: George Wallace

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Paul Robeson is a high school with 1363 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 89% Black, 9% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 71.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 83% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal and senior leaders are an effective force for change. Parents and students welcome the academy structure, which is having a positive impact on the school's learning environment. They favor the small working communities which provide imaginative specialized courses in line with new technology and business in line with the principal's clearly conceived vision for the school.

The school collects and uses a wide range of data. This information comes from students' academic performance, observation of teaching and other sources such as the Learning Environment Survey. The school works efficiently and effectively in apprising students of their performance at frequent intervals, for example through advisory sessions that efficiently support students' individual learning needs. Teachers use data well to set measurable and achievable short-term learning goals with students. This information also informs the setting of achievable and relevant school-wide goals and professional development needs. However, while there are examples of effective differentiation, too many teachers are not planning for students' varied needs and levels of performance. This too frequently leads to a lack of challenge for students and minimal motivation. Attendance is low and there is a high number of holdover students is extremely high, many of whom are already overage when they join the school in grade 9.

There is a high level of supportive communication between senior leaders and staff through comprehensive structures for meetings and professional development. The extensive program operated by senior leaders to keep a check on the quality of teaching usefully identifies important professional development needs. However, observation criteria do not include an evaluation of the challenge for students or the overall impact of teaching on learning. Communication between staff and parents, and staff, senior leaders and students, while good in some instances, is too inconsistent. The school government is ineffective in tackling issues that are important to students.

The breadth and good quality of evaluation through the school ensures that senior leaders know their school well. They learn well from research and working practices. The inquiry teams have developed clear goals and effective strategies. However, a major task for senior leaders is turning their findings, through professional development and guidance, into consistent and effective teaching and learning across the whole school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school collects a wealth of data, whose frequent and regular analysis allows senior leaders to adapt, turnkey and design new tools to promote student learning.
- The outcomes of frequent meetings at a variety of levels provide the principal with a good range of data at regular intervals to support effective planning and goal setting for school-wide improvement.
- The academy structure is responsible for setting an increasingly positive tone across the school so that learning occurs in safe and respectful classroom environments.
- The well-developed and supportive professional development program links directly to school-wide goals and teachers' own professional needs.
- School plans for improving student outcomes are often successful because of the strong links with goal setting and evaluative conversations between senior leaders, teachers and students that clarify each student's goals.
- The principal's clear, shared vision for the development of the school has enabled the implementation of a range of effective systems to support students' academic and personal growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the attendance rate of students from its current low position and develop strategies to ensure that the size of the holdover population for the school drops significantly.
- Use data more consistently to increase the amount of good quality teaching across the school to increase the match of task to students' need in the pursuit of increasing motivation and levels of challenge for students.
- Ensure that there is greater focus during formal and informal observations on how well students are challenged and on the overall impact of teaching on students' learning.
- Improve the consistency of communication with parents and students, including ways to help raise students' self-esteem and in particular to continue to build trust and respect in relationships.

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 a wide range of data. It gathers information at frequent and regular intervals to generate a strong picture of individual student needs. In addition, senior leaders collect data to identify other patterns and trends. The cabinet usefully acquires detailed information about the quality of teaching. This data is gathered through extensive learning walks through all classrooms over two days. School leaders provide developmental feedback to teachers and this sometimes leads to more extensive professional development. The relatively new management structure helps ensure that all students who attend on a frequent basis receive constant up-to-date information and support regarding their performance and progress, especially in relation to their personal learning goals. Teachers monitor student performance closely. Students and their families receive good, clear feedback concerning progress and projected levels of achievement. Communication lines are open and well used between parents and teachers, although practices are not yet consistent and parents do not always receive the range of information that they would like.

Close attention to individual student performance allows teachers to identify and provide well-targeted learning support programs. Teachers make effective use of item analyses to identify gaps in learning. Where re-teaching of topics is required, teachers discuss the best ways to secure students' understanding. The school pays satisfactory attention to the needs of special education students and English language learners. However, although they have a wealth of data at their disposal, it is rare for senior leaders or faculty to drill into the data to identify patterns, trends and common features between either highly successful students or those who are underperforming.

Attendance is poor and has been for several years. Two significant populations are working against higher attendance. These are the proportion of long term absentees and the lower motivation of the very high number of holdover students causing them to absent themselves from school all too frequently. Senior leaders also know that underperformance of many students is a consequence of them missing the first and last periods of the day. However, although the school is taking steps to address these issues, it has not been successful yet in finding a ways to tackle these problems.

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 school employs a robust system of goal setting for students through their advisory program. Students discuss their strengths and current scores so that achievable percentage targets are set for each subject. There is frequent, supportive dialogue

between advisory teachers and their students at the end of each marking period scores are discussed and at times revised. However, much less consistent is the setting of differentiated goals that provide students with subject specific and skills-based next learning steps. Equally inconsistent is the response by teachers to such steps in their planning for differentiated learning, except through a broad range of computer assisted learning programs for students' independent use to gain further knowledge and skills.

Overall analysis of the performance of the school, including staff and students' perceptions, ensures that the school-wide goals reflect core priorities. Much discussion in various forums between faculty and senior leaders occurs to generate these goals. Staff are very clear about the school's priorities and the strategies necessary to achieve them. The goals are achievable, measurable, highly relevant and time-related with specific checkpoints in place to monitor progress towards them. The school management structure is democratic and strong. It ensures that all staff know and understand the core goals, and recognize their role in setting student goals. There is a whole school mission to encourage students to gain 80 per cent mastery in their subjects. This goal is a consistent feature throughout the school and known by teachers, parents and students. The data the school collects shows that students who reach such levels through their high school years always make graduation at two levels higher.

Parents are generally well informed, although there are discrepancies between the current highly positive views of some parents and those expressed in the most recent Learning Environment Survey. Parental perception is a key issue for the school and, therefore, communications, including school-based surveys, are increasingly important to the school in order that an accurate image of the school is conveyed to the community. All staff work hard to engage parents even though the response from them is rather poor. Teachers have websites that allows transfer of a wide range of important subject information as well as individual student's personal information. Those parents who do use the various systems value strongly the ease with which it is possible to communicate with teachers both personally and electronically.

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 provides a suitably broad curriculum that includes a small number of advanced placement courses and opportunities for grade 12 students to attend college courses. Additionally, students have access to a wide range of good intervention programs that they value and use well. Senior leaders and teachers are well versed in State standards, and use rubrics effectively in nearly all subjects. Students are highly conversant in the use of rubrics. Consequently, they understand the performance required for good grades as well as using them effectively for peer-assessment and self-assessment purposes.

Teachers have good assessment systems in place. As well as recording student grades, they keep a detailed portfolio of students' work. However, many teachers do not make the best use of this information to plan work tailored to the needs of individual students. Recently the school successfully carried out an audit of student learning preferences, but as in the case of data analysis, there is yet no extensive use of such information by teachers in their lesson planning. Although some teachers are effective

at differentiation through questioning techniques and others through the use of resources use, differentiation is the exception rather than the rule in most classrooms. As a result, progress is too slow in too many lessons because students, while being co-operative and prepared to listen, are not sufficiently engaged or energized by the topics they are learning.

The school uses the budget well to ensure that the school is efficiently and effectively organized. Much of the budget is spent on staffing to ensure that the four learning academies operate smoothly and sufficiently independently to be regarded as a “home base” for students. The school has a suitable range of other resources, especially computers, to support the curriculum. The library is an impressive resource, but underused.

Most staff, including senior leaders, show respect for their peers and for students. When comparing the Learning Environment Survey results with comments from teachers, staff and students, it is evident that there is a growing positive tone and culture for learning. The legacy of mistrust is diminishing fast and staff, students and parents are largely supportive of the direction in which the school is moving that is supportive of students’ academic and personal growth.

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.

Professional development is well managed and valued throughout the school. The program of classroom observations is well constructed and effective. In addition to formal observations, senior leaders conduct walkthroughs of every classroom over a period of a few days, several times a year. This highly positive element of school-wide monitoring provides senior leaders with a wealth of useful information. Importantly, teachers receive constructive feedback outlining commendations and areas for development. Teachers value the professional dialogue with senior leaders arising from these walkthroughs and speak of the resulting improvements in their teaching. The senior leaders’ learning walkthroughs also provide essential information for school-wide professional development, such as the emphasis on improving teachers’ questioning techniques.

The school has well-established meeting structures. Teachers value and enjoy professional development and the supportive nature of their several subject, grade and academy weekly meetings. These are organized at a variety of levels depending on the school goals, academy requirements and the individual’s personal needs. New teachers receive excellent support where frequent mentoring, modeling of lessons and inter-visitations form part of the program. However, teachers rarely have opportunities to visit classrooms where subjects other than their own are taught.

The inquiry team is working on two major projects. The team learnt much from the process last year and, as a direct consequence, the target population this year is more sharply defined. The action research program is clear and strategies are well defined. It is too early for research findings, but a program to disseminate information is being planned.

The school is effective in securing a suitably wide range of support from external organizations and other services. Most of the work directly supports students' academic and personal growth. However, the Saturday Institute, for example, operates successfully and works principally in the interests of parents.

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.

There are effective systems in place to monitor students' performance. The school has a wealth of data and in many areas of the school's work, timely improvements are made. Such information provides the principal and academy leaders with crucial information about students' projected achievement scores for the forthcoming Regents examinations. Consequently, some revisions to teaching occur, but most often additional work is tailored to students' needs through the many computer-based intervention support programs. All plans have interim checkpoints so that goals are regularly re-evaluated. While all of the school's monitoring systems are largely efficient, too often analysis of student performance and classroom observations do not translate into a serious revision of teaching practices, especially in relation to differentiation.

The principal and senior leaders are acutely aware of the messages contained in and arising from such documents as the Progress Report, Learning Environment Survey and other forms of data. These evaluations have led to modifications to school-wide goals and to revisions to aspects of each academy's work. Results of test scores and end-of-marking period assessments trigger meetings between teachers and academy leaders where appropriate so that adjustments to teaching or interventions for students can be made.

The school's evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement is accurate, although the breadth and depth of information identified in the school's self-evaluation form is somewhat less than exists within the school. The principal has a clear vision for the school that is overwhelmingly shared by staff. There is strong recognition about the need to cultivate a rich and positive learning environment to enrich students' academic and social lives in preparation for the demands of business and new technology. The academy system provides a good structure to achieve this. However, there is still much to do to ensure that that all teaching is consistently motivating and challenging for all students in line with some of the good practice that exists in the school. The Comprehensive Educational Plan goals are clear, precise and highly relevant for the school. They have timeframes and checkpoints to ensure that revisions and organizational change can occur. This is a school that knows what it has to do to improve further and has the plans in place to do so.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Paul Robeson High School	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>				
	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>				
	Δ	➤	✓	+
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, 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.

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