

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Roberto Clemente

Elementary School 38

**232 East 103 Street
New York
NY 10029**

Principal: Norma Caraballo

Dates of review: February 25 - 26, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Luz T. Cortazzo

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Roberto Clemente is an elementary school with 378 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 27% Black, 66% Hispanic, 3% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 89.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 78% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

There is no doubt that the exceptional leadership drives the success of Roberto Clemente School. The principal, ably supported by the assistant principal, has created a strong and collaboratively learning community. She encourages total commitment from the entire staff to strive for excellence. To this end, faculty members carry out their roles and responsibilities with a certainty of purpose and a desire to succeed. Members of the executive cabinet, work in total agreement keeping the exceptionally clear vision for the school's future and supporting progress towards very clear long-term goals, with timeframed pacing for monitoring student progress in all core subjects. At the center of everything the school does is the total commitment of the staff to provide the students with the best education and the recognition that students must be successful. Students are also effusive about their school, stating, "Our teachers make learning fun, and make us feel smart."

The school's approach to data analysis is very thorough. As the data specialist stated, 'Data guides our teaching.' This whole-school approach is evident in all aspects of the school's work. Teachers are increasingly more adept at analyzing the data and consistently plan lessons in all core subjects to meet students' needs. The administration and faculty recognize the importance of an integrated curriculum, where students are actively involved in project-based learning and the arts, and are encouraged to make connections with their own experiences and interests. Teachers implement backwards design to develop an inquiry-base approach to learning and to differentiate instruction in all core subjects. This enables the students to set their own goals in social studies and science, to want to investigate on their own and extend these inquiries beyond the classroom. The administration recognizes that taking a closer look at how differentiation of instruction occurs would support them in monitoring and evaluating teacher and student outcomes that relate directly to individual and school-wide goals.

The school makes a great effort to cultivate extensive partnerships and very effective collaborations around addressing the social, emotional, and academic needs of students. Parents appreciate the many opportunities for celebrations and successes, and the open lines of communication with the school. However, the school recognizes the need to develop additional strategies to engage all parents, especially the immigrant parents.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has developed a strong, nurturing and caring community, which contributes to a positive learning environment.
- The team's work has been successful in deepening the school's understanding of how students learn best and has been instrumental in encouraging teachers to implement approaches that accelerate the progress of students most at risk.
- Goal setting for student and teacher outcomes is highly collaborative and effective in supporting student progress in all core subjects.
- The principal always puts the school's vision into practice, resulting in great respect from staff, students and parents who collectively strive for continued success.
- The curriculum is very accessible and effectively individualized for its many special education students.
- The core curriculum is rich, broad and relevant and offers students opportunities to engage in inquiry and project-based learning.
- Professional development opportunities match the needs of individuals very well, while at the same time effectively supporting whole-school goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that teaching is highly differentiated so that all students' needs are met to allow them to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practice and improve student outcomes.
- Streamline school improvement planning by identifying goals that reflect the school's integrated approach to learning and sharpen interim and long-term goals to enable all staff to measure the impact of actions on student and teacher outcomes.
- Continue to focus on differentiation, particularly in terms of varying the activities provided as opposed to expecting different outcomes from one activity.

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 well developed.

The school has an exceptional knowledge of individual students supported by a wealth of statistical information. The staff has worked extremely hard to improve data pertaining to boys. The analysis and use of data for this group is now very good. It matches the quality of the extensive analysis the school carries out in order to understand patterns and trends in achievements for English language learners, special education students, girls and other sub-groups. The school is constantly seeking to refine and deepen the wide range of data it analyzes, including student attendance. As a result, the school continually challenges itself to do better for its students. Over the past two years they have made good strides in raising student attendance for example, although there is potential to deepen practice still further. The school pays close attention to even the smallest group of students, recognizing that close monitoring of their achievements enables timely intervention that ensures consistency of results. The high number of students meeting the benchmarks is a testament to the schools' effectiveness in using data to accelerate the learning of all students. The school's Inquiry Team is working extremely well. The team has chosen a target group of grade 4 African American boys working at the lowest third Citywide in math, scoring at low level 3 or below, for whom proficiency ratings were also low. Facilitated by the very efficient data specialist, the team has collated excellent information for the group and is now making very good use of this information to have an impact on whole-school math instruction.

Parents work in partnership with teachers to share information about their child and to keep abreast of their progress. The school is expanding the way in which it keeps parents informed by sending home progress reports every six weeks between the formal report card periods. The reports give detailed information about what the students can do and what they need to work on. Parents appreciate that teachers are always available to discuss concerns and are proactive in contacting them if the need arises. Parents expressed their satisfaction with the curriculum night offered by the school to inform parents of grade level goals and expectations for the school year.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

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

Administration and faculty have very high expectations for all students in their care and explain these in practical terms to parents and students. The students spoke of the high

demands made of them; one student stated, “I feel awesome and powerful because I learn a lot here at PS 38. The teachers never stop teaching; I feel smart.”

Students are involved in all aspects of learning from the very beginning and are encouraged to show initiative. They take an active part in displaying their work by working in project-based activities. They not only understand how to improve in reading writing and math, but can also explain what questions they want answered in social studies, science, and art. Goal setting arises systematically through conferencing and by using the inquiry-based approach to learning. Because students are involved in setting their own goals, and in reflecting on how they learn, they are highly motivated to achieve. The inquiry team has been successful in taking the school’s understanding of data to the next level through a willingness to raise important questions as well as to analyze data in depth. All members of the team look discerningly at a wide range of assessments and evaluate interventions honestly in order to examine what is getting in the way of learning. Most importantly, they are prepared to try innovations in order to revise conditions of learning, and devise strategies that engage those students most at risk, when tried and tested methods do not work. As a direct result of the team’s work, there has been a “culture shift”. Teachers now place a much stronger emphasis on inquiry-based learning for all students, not just those who are part of the team’s target population, but through the school, as results show emphatically that this approach gives students a context for learning.

The goals of the Comprehensive Educational Plan inform all aspects of school life and, on a monthly basis, the school leadership team, the executive committee and the inquiry team reflects on progress towards these. This process is very effective. It provides complimentary structures to support the school’s practice of goal setting for all students. It clearly specifies when benchmark assessments occur throughout the year and tentative assessment dates are set. Consequently, all teachers have a clear picture of the school’s assessment system. This results in very effective long-term and short-term planning, for both administrators and teachers.

The school organizes a range of well-attended events to inform and to entertain parents. Curriculum night in one of many opportunities offered to parents at which time the school informs them of grade level goals and expectations for the year. One parent expressed her satisfaction of how well informed the parents are with the number of progress reports that are sent home between the formal report card time periods to inform parents on student progress. Parents are confident that their children are safe and supported to achieve well.

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 well developed.

The administrators and faculty aim high to help all students meet or exceed New York State standards. All decisions related to the curriculum occur within the context of high standards of academic rigor. Teachers use the core knowledge curriculum to develop monthly interdisciplinary units with hands on activities, opportunities to be creative enabling students to succeed in many different ways. They place an emphasis on involving students in the learning process and on finding out how each student learns best. The student-centered approach to learning is evident by the project-based

opportunities provided to them. This approach supports different learning styles and encourages the development of the visual arts. The connections are clearly seen in the 'cookshop' model which serves to promote health and nutrition, integrating science, math and writing for early childhood students. This is just one example of the many interdisciplinary connections across different curriculum areas.

Assessment systems are in place for each student. Teachers take very good conference notes and use higher-level questioning skills to extend the thinking of the more advanced students. They use their extensive notes and a wide range of formative and summative data to group students accordingly. Differentiation is in place in all lessons, but the school aims to extend this further to include a wider range of opening activities to match student-learning needs. Too often, differentiation is by outcome. The school is exploring the use of a school-wide enrichment model approach to curriculum compacting as a tool for those students that exceed grade level expectations.

In response to the last Quality Review, the school's improved focus on technology has resulted in organizational and funding adaptations to meet students' technology needs. An example includes the designation of a technology period for all students. This ensures that each student has allocated time to work on their individual goals with specialist support or programs. The technology teacher is working productively with class and cluster teachers to integrate new resources into classrooms and maximize their potential. Students were excited about conducting research, as seen in the fourth grade projects on Colonial America. Leaders are anxious to extend learning opportunities further into the school's curriculum by increasing the use of technology in exploring innovative approaches to teaching and learning, and in monitoring the impact on student achievement.

The school is orderly, structured and safe. Day-to-day procedures are consistent and sensitive. The students feel safe and are able to approach any member of the staff with academic or personal problems. As stated by a fifth grade student, "I like the school because it is very structured". The parents value the support they receive from the school. There is an extensive range of activities for parents in all curriculum areas. Faculty sees their involvement as integral for the school success.

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 school has a well-established and effective approach to professional development and improving instruction. Rigorous observations of instruction by the administrative team result in consistent constructive feedback and discussions in supervision conferences valued by teachers. This is particularly helpful in supporting new teachers and teachers new to the school. Literacy and math coaches are also effectively involved in providing on-going support for teachers in these areas. Grade-level team-planning meetings, held at various times during the week and involving other core teachers as necessary, encourage faculty to work very collaboratively. The large number of collaborative team teaching classes provides the right setting for teachers who are new to the profession or the school, to get quick insights into the school's vision and internal procedures.

Teams have a strong focus on planning units that meet students' needs and promote high achievement for all. They also contribute effectively to the overall leadership and management of the school through support staff. Teachers share their successes and concerns with each other to do their best for their students. The school has developed a strong partnership with Bank Street College for Social Emotional Development, which provides teachers of early childhood grades with excellent learning opportunities, and curricula that supports a positive classroom-learning environment. The work of the inquiry team, now in its second year, has encouraged a culture of deeper reflection of the needs of the students' most at risk. The team's effective approaches and instructional strategies are shared across the entire teaching community. Although teachers use regular feedback to reflect on their practice and to identify goals for improvement, this process is not as consistent or systemic as it could be. The school has not looked rigorously at the impact of professional development effectiveness to improve student outcomes.

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 administration and faculty have established effective systems that enable them to monitor the performance and progress of individual students and groups, as well as school-wide trends. All teams meet regularly to analyze a wide range of information and to share their findings. The school is therefore able to respond immediately to identified needs and to modify interventions in the light of continuous monitoring. Class-based and cluster teachers examine the day-to-day assessments in order to fine-tune their teaching and to select different approaches as necessary. Academic intervention teachers focus on academic support via Reading Recovery, Wilson, or Voyager and use their analysis of data to question their practice and to broaden their teaching techniques, so that those students most at risk can benefit. School-improvement planning is thorough and defined by specific goals, careful resources and well-matched activities.

School improvement planning is thorough and defined by specific goals. The school self-evaluation form is of good quality and the school is able to demonstrate that its work is having sustained effect in raising achievement and accelerating progress for almost all learners. However, interim and long-term goals do not describe student and teacher outcomes clearly enough to enable the school to monitor and evaluate school-wide goals with the same rigor as it applies to other areas of work.

Roberto Clemente's learning community continually reflects, monitors and revises its practices. It welcomes external perspectives that encourage the school to question how effective it is in every aspect of its work. To this end, the executive cabinet examined the Learning Environment Survey in depth where teachers indicated that better communication was needed. Consequently, the administration and faculty have worked together to examine the areas of improvement and identify next steps. There is real commitment in the way in which administration, faculty and parents work in close collaboration to find the best ways to enable each individual student to succeed. All members share the same very strong vision for the school and its students and work very hard at achieving that vision.

School name: Roberto Clemente 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, DYO, 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