

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

The Richard Rodgers School of Art and Technology

Elementary School 166

**132 West 89th Street
Manhattan
NY 10024**

Principal: Debbie J. Hand

Dates of review: February 9-10, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Sara Carvajal

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Richard Rodgers School of Art and Technology is an elementary school with 598 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 18% Black, 27% Hispanic, 48% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 93.4%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

“The difference here now is like the difference between night and day,” is the resonating celebration that one hears from families and faculty at PS 166 since the acquisition of their new principal. Bringing onboard a combination of visionary rigor, data analysis experience and technology expertise, the recently arrived principal has worked to make immediate changes to the climate and dynamics of the entire school community.

Using an open door policy as the primary vehicle by which to overcome the communication barriers of the past, the principal has established an admirable level of transparency when dialoguing with assorted constituents about important issues, including matters of curriculum, strategies for improving student behavior in the school cafeteria, and ongoing budgetary constraints. Teachers, especially, find that PS 166 is evolving into a “pleasurable environment” where they are able to share with one another in order to actively learn to improve on their craft in a non-threatening way.

Students express a similar positive vibe when they speak about the changes that they have observed at PS 166 this year, stating that the principal and staff have “students assume more responsibility and opportunity if they choose.” The opportunities students refer to include: owning their data and being able to articulate it, taking full advantage of the plethora of varied instructional resources available in classrooms, and independently approaching teachers when they require adjustments to their learning experiences because the material is either too difficult or not challenging enough.

Given the momentum that the new leadership has introduced to the PS 166 community, moving forward, all school constituents have an opportunity to build upon the current year’s successes. At present, the school does not dig deeply enough in its analysis and use of data in developing interim goals in all curriculum areas for individual students. Similarly, the professional development plans for individual teachers are not yet formalized and monitored at interim checkpoints throughout the year. Finally, the level of communication is not yet sufficient so that all stakeholders – leadership, teachers, parents and students – are able to articulate their respective interim goals with the same conviction by which they convey the long-term, school-wide expectations.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal effectively communicates her vision and high expectations to parents, students and teachers, and so has developed a common purpose to accelerate student progress in a very short time.
- The principal and faculty have initiated the practice of gathering data across the core curriculum areas in order to develop meaningful learning goals for students.
- There are actionable interim goals for students that are reviewed and adjusted throughout the year in an effort to support individualized student achievement gains in summative assessments.
- The principal has made purposeful organizational decisions to develop a cohesive, multi-tiered professional development plan that will address the varying needs of individual teachers in order to further impact student achievement.
- School leadership has created a system of collaboration that empowers teachers to be reflective practitioners who can improve differentiated instructional practices throughout the site in an ongoing fashion.
- The principal has established a sense of mutual trust and respect with parents, students and teachers in order to increase the collaborative endeavors that impact on the students' assorted success.

What the school needs to improve

- Systemize processes for the consistent setting of differentiated next-step learning goals for individuals so that students can articulate these clearly.
- Monitor classroom instructional practices to inform the development of formalized individual professional development goals and plans for teachers.
- Develop teachers' effective use of student data when planning for the differentiation of instruction to increase students' engagement in their learning and the desire to make progress, both academically and personally.
- Expand on collaborative decision-making to evaluate the effectiveness of newly instituted school-wide initiatives and modify them as required to strive towards continued school improvement.

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 data-driven vision of the newly appointed principal permeates throughout the layers of the school. In partnership with the inquiry team, the principal has established an effective momentum in data collection and analysis. The core inquiry team has established protocols for periodically compiling data in math, carefully observing the dynamics of instruction as it impacts this year's target group and measuring gains with formative assessment in an ongoing fashion. This methodical process has then been articulated to grade level teams via weekly common planning sessions and occasional monthly faculty conferences in an effort to achieve a ripple effect of data usage throughout the building, as well as generate other types of inquiry work among various cohorts of teachers.

On a deeper level, the school consistently conducts analyses of subgroup data and the principal and faculty are cognizant of the recent gains and dips in student achievement, with a particular lens for the work with English language learners across curriculum areas on all grade levels. As such, the school's English as a second language specialist ensures that all teachers are supported with a comprehensive outline of interim goals for the English language learners that they service within their respective classes. This data, which is reviewed and revised collaboratively by the specialist and classroom teachers, is based on a combination of rubric-driven student self-assessments and the results of formative assessments of the four language modalities (listening, speaking, reading, writing).

Classroom teachers have also independently explored the value of data collection and analysis with their own students as they have ventured beyond capturing data during reading and writing conferences or math tests. Across the grades, teachers are increasingly engaging in "kid-watching" during science experiments and using "rubrics to grade monthly performance tasks in social studies." These additional means of compiling data contribute to setting interim and long-term instructional goals for groups of students.

The school has not yet developed a formal system for communicating the data in English language arts, math, science and social studies beyond the mandated marking periods, which provides families with insufficient opportunities to reflect on student growth, question dips and time to seek additional support.

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 principal, in collaboration with the school leadership team, has developed a comprehensive series of data-driven, school-wide goals, which speak to growing student achievement levels, the current curriculum and elements of the school environment. In doing so, the principal has modeled the way by which teachers should employ all available data in order to define grade-wide, classroom and individual student learning goals in a reflective, cyclical manner. As a result, grade teams of teachers are able to articulate well the interim grade-wide and classroom goals for their students in the areas of English language arts, math and science, using a combination of unit checklists and conference notes for assessing the students’ levels of mastery and determining future planning.

The school communicates the various layers of instructional goals and expectations for student success at PS 166 to parents through a variety of ways. At the beginning of the school year, the principal stimulates thinking about the rigors and high academic expectations of the school via Curriculum Night, a new tradition where parents have the opportunity to learn first-hand from the principal and teachers about the curricular goals and expectations of the school. Another set of notable venues for communicating the academic rigor at the site are the school and class newsletters, which are issued systematically to families, by the principal and classroom teachers respectively. The newsletters are the primary vehicle for informing parents of accomplishments, upcoming events and next steps in units of study for assorted curriculum areas. To further supplement the parents’ understanding of the school’s expectations, the principal and assorted members of the school faculty have provided curriculum-driven workshops for families, on topics ranging from effective literacy strategies to the use of technology at home, as part of the monthly parent teacher association meetings.

At this time, the school does not yet immerse students in systemized, on-going conversations regarding goal setting across the curriculum areas so that their individual learning goals do not exist as entities that are detached and foreign to the students. As a result, students are not yet able to articulate these clearly.

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.

After carefully reviewing assorted configurations of summative data and determining the needs of the school, the principal decided to discontinue the collaboration with outside consultants who were seeking to define balanced literacy instruction at the site. In the absence of scripts and prompts, teachers have been encouraged to reflect on what they already know about balanced literacy and collaborate with one another to ensure horizontal and vertical continuity of quality assessment and instructional practices in this area. In a similar vein, math instruction is improving as teachers continually uncover the benefits of the math games of the Every Day Math program in the context of a differentiated approach of flexible grouping of students.

In the content areas of science and social studies, the tradition of textbook talk has been traded in for a more engaging and student-centered, inquiry-based approach. In particular, the principal has prompted a shift towards an experiment-driven science curriculum, which is aligned with the mandated State standards and City scope and sequence and supported with a textbook as a secondary resource. For social studies, the school is investigating the benefits of trade books and web-based resources, such as Renzulli Learning, in unpacking challenging units of study.

Students, parents and teachers agree that instruction at the school has improved considerably, providing students with periodic “check-ins” to gauge student understanding, offering struggling students extra help both during and after school, and engaging students in “challenges” so that no student gets bored with the instruction at hand. One PS 166 student very eloquently referred to “the way that teachers and staff connect to children makes learning fun.”

The school does not sufficiently demonstrate that the principal collaborates with teachers to develop the effective use of student data when planning for the differentiation of instruction. As a result, running records, conference notes, quantitative and anecdotal data from all curriculum areas are not yet considered when determining the appropriate content, process or product to be assigned to individuals.

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.

Teachers and parents alike are greatly appreciative of the way that the new principal has “established and maintained an open-door policy” this year. This approach embraces the input of all stakeholders in the school as it provides ample opportunity for reciprocated feedback on issues, such as curriculum, student discipline and budgetary constraints. Similarly, the open-door policy fosters a sense of mutual trust and respect, which is woven throughout the fabric of the school.

Teachers embrace the expertise and vision of the principal for improved communication between colleagues and individualized professional development opportunities. The formal class schedule allows for several common team planning meetings each week. In addition, as a result of the “encouraging push to collaborate” on behalf of the principal, teachers voluntarily meet far beyond the regularly scheduled planning times, including during their lunch breaks, to chat about students, instructional concerns and effective practices. Teachers also welcome the risk-free learning culture that is evolving at the site where they are now “able to admit what they don’t know in order to develop professionally”. The principal encourages teachers to independently reflect on the quality of their craft and research professional development opportunities. Then, together, the principal and individual teachers determine if participation is appropriate and feasible.

Families also view the principal as a supportive figure with high expectations who seeks to develop the entire school community. Parents are especially satisfied with the principal’s “broad frame of reference as an educator and parent”. They express that the newly implemented monthly classroom newsletters are very insightful as they provide a range of information for families, including upcoming events, units of study and class learning goals. In addition, parents compliment the school’s posture in striking a balance

between honoring tradition while making a paradigm shift. In particular, families admire the principal's decisions to maintain the school's successful music program and collaborations with local community-based organizations, such as Ballet Hispanico, while making changes that redefine instruction in the content areas, by adding a science lab and investing in more inquiry-based materials in social studies.

As the principal has not yet begun formal classroom observations, the school does not demonstrate how it utilizes the data obtained through the systematic monitoring of classroom practice to formalize professional development plans that include measurable interim and long-term goals for individual teachers.

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 principal and faculty are clearly versed on the data sources which best suit analysis, reflection and revision on the school- and grade-wide levels. As such, the school efficiently employs the use of the Progress Report, the Learning Environment Survey, ARIS, and ACUITY as primary data sources used to continuously mold the Comprehensive Educational Plan and its complementary, interim, grade-specific goals. Individual student goals have also been developed by teachers although their style and level of intensity vastly differs throughout the site. Whereas in the gifted and talented classes, students could often articulate their individualized goals and interim benchmarks, this was not systemized across the school in all classes and with all students.

To raise the level of engagement and rigor in the classroom, the principal has shared her vision for the marriage between the deep analysis of individual student data and instructional planning to increase the successful differentiation of instruction based on student interest and achievement level. This ongoing conversation has taken place through inquiry team meetings, faculty conferences, periodic conference days and weekly team planning sessions. Parents and students are also primed to realize this vision through the continuous communication between school and homes, as evidenced through monthly and weekly newsletters, the commitment of the parent School Leadership Team members, and the monthly parent teacher association meetings.

Since this is the principal's first year in the school, all stakeholders have not yet engaged in collaborative decision-making to evaluate the effectiveness of newly implemented school-wide initiatives, in the absence of outside consultants, and modify them as required to strive towards continued school improvement.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Richard Rodgers School of Art and Technology	△	▷	✓	+
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, 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>	△	▶	✓	+			
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>	△	▶	✓	+			
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>	△	▶	✓	+			
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							
△	Underdeveloped	▶	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed