

Quality Review Report

2009-2010

The Pacific School

Elementary School 038

**450 Pacific Street
Brooklyn
NY 11217**

Principal: Yolanda Ramirez

Dates of review: November 16 - 17, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Pacific School is an elementary school with 477 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 41% Black, 39% Hispanic, 13% White, 3% Native American, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 92.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Pacific School is committed to continuing to improve academic achievement. To this end, it has used the findings from its previous Quality Review and other data sources as a road map to help reach this goal. The administrative team has carefully analyzed the identified needs, and strategically planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated targeted actions. The school aligns all budgetary, staffing, and organizational decisions with school-wide goals. Teacher team meetings are a priority, with all grade level teams being led by an experienced member of the school's core inquiry team. The use of data permeates all aspects of school life. Not only does the school analyze State summative data, but it also uses monthly unit tests, running records, teacher conference notes, periodic assessments, and rubric-based assignments to determine student needs and define next steps. The curriculum for special education students follows the same standards-based curriculum maps that the teachers and the administration have developed for the general education students, and the instruction is equally rigorous. This had led to increased achievement for students in all self-contained classes.

Parents, teachers and students speak proudly of the school's high expectations and collegial atmosphere. They cite the bi-weekly principal breakfasts, monthly progress reports, and monthly opportunities to come and meet with grade-level teachers, called *Spotlight on Learning* sessions, as exemplary practices that engender deep conversations around student and school needs. New teachers praise the support that the school provides to them through mentoring and collaborative teamwork, and all teachers reflect on the positive pedagogy that comes from knowing all the students on their grade, rather than just the students in their class. Students talk about the use of rubrics in all their subjects and "reaching mastery" as a goal.

The Pacific School has come a very long way since last year's Quality Review. However, instruction is not yet sufficiently differentiated so as to challenge and engage the higher-achieving students. In addition, the high level of targeted, authentic teacher feedback, which is seen on student work in the writing process, is not yet consistently seen in all content areas. While the school is working to provide teachers with greater skills in the use of ARIS and other technologies, several teachers still expressed discomfort with the use of these modalities. Finally, there is no specific protocol in place yet which gives collaborative teacher teams the opportunity to share their findings on a school-wide basis. Nonetheless, the leadership and the school community at The Pacific School have shown themselves to be committed to improving student achievement and "making great things happen!"

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's comprehensive and highly effective organizational decisions support the school's instructional goals and have led to improved student achievement.
 - Identifying math as a school-wide need, the school used data from the State's summative and school's formative assessments to drill down to grade level trends and supplemented the Everyday Math program with components from the TERC math investigations program. This has resulted in an exemplary increase in student achievement.
 - Administration responded to the analysis of a slump in grade 4 English language arts and math by re-evaluating staffing placement decisions and moving several strong grade 3 teachers into grade 4. Grade 5 teachers were provided with additional academic intervention to address these students' needs. This staffing change created highly collaborative teacher teams that have already accelerated student progress.
- Teachers and administrators collect and analyze a broad range of student performance data on an ongoing and consistent basis enabling the school to evaluate student achievement and identify school-wide trends.
 - The use of teacher developed rubrics, in alignment with the school's specific goals and targeted standards, is a driving force in all classrooms. This has focused teacher support, enhanced student ownership of achievement, and provided an additional source of measurable growth. Students comment on the support they receive in "reaching mastery".
 - *Test Companion*, a monthly assessment in English language arts and math provided by the Kaplan consultancy, augments teacher conference notes, running records, and interim assessments. It also serves as an indicator of interim progress, and provides the administration with a report that evaluates student growth on an ongoing basis. These tools have enabled the school to implement targeted strategies, such as "box and bullets", which have helped students increase reading comprehension.
- Special education students are supported by a rigorous, standards-based curriculum creating consistent levels of engagement, enthusiasm for learning and high expectations among students.
 - Students in self-contained classes follow the same standards-based curriculum maps as other classes on the grade. The teachers work well together and plan lessons collaboratively that are rigorous, differentiated and creative. One such collaboration resulted in a lesson where students analyzed the Michael Jackson song "The Man in the Mirror," and identified the concept of theme, as "what the writing is really saying".
 - Students are invited to attend *Power Saturdays*, an academic intervention specifically geared to targeted students that provides additional support in identified areas. Students who attended the program have all shown improved academic achievement.

- The school administration has fostered professional collaboration through grade-level teacher inquiry teams, enabling teachers to reflect on instructional practices and implement a consistent curriculum.
 - Scheduled grade level teacher inquiry teams meet weekly, and are led by experienced leaders who served on the school's core team last year. These teams have identified specific student needs and targeted strategies to address those needs. The fourth grade team, whose focus is knowledge of number facts, is implementing additional time for math games within classroom instruction.
 - Teachers have developed articulated curriculum maps, working collaboratively with a partner school within the district. This work has enabled teachers to identify the critical content for each grade and to hone their skills in teaching this content.
- The school provides targeted, individualized professional development, enabling teachers to learn effective teaching methods and work collaboratively to hone their skills and share best practices.
 - The school leadership works collaboratively to conduct informal observations for several hours on a daily basis and uses the data to identify teacher strengths and areas of need. Teachers are then partnered appropriately and serve as mentors. New teachers, and also experienced teachers receiving support with new grades, programs, or specific skills, commented on how this has improved instruction.
 - Teachers are supported by both a math and a literacy coach, as well as by math and literacy consultants. Teachers demonstrating specific areas of need are supported by cyclical professional development plans that provide them with targeted support and are evaluated by ongoing informal observations. The administration proudly identified teachers who had made great progress.
- There is a wide range of opportunities for parents to be involved in student learning, monitor their child's progress, and share concerns for school improvement, resulting in a culture of mutual trust and common purpose.
 - *Spotlight on Learning*, a unique program developed by the school, enables parents to come to the school once a month and meet with a teacher who will walk them through their child's current strengths and needs, and address any concerns. The teachers are freed up on a rotating basis and, because every teacher knows every child on the grade due to the collaborative team meetings, parents have consistent access to accurate information and are able to provide input as well.
 - The principal hosts a bi-weekly breakfast for parents, on a school morning and on a Saturday morning, which provides the school community with the opportunity to bring their concerns to a public forum and influence school-wide decisions. This, coupled with the school's student *Town Hall* meetings, gives all constituents a voice. These meetings have resulted in changes to dismissal policy and greater enrichment opportunities.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen differentiation of instruction so that lessons engage all students and offer rigorous challenges that enhance the learning and achievement of high-performing students.
 - The school has one gifted class on each grade. Instruction in these classes, though aligned with the appropriate standards-based curriculum, is not any more rigorous or challenging than that of the traditional classes, limiting the opportunities for improved achievement by high-performing students.
 - While the school does differentiate instruction in terms of readability, they do not consistently provide more diverse opportunities for study for high-achieving students in non-gifted classes.
- Provide authentic teacher feedback, which conveys the clear next steps needed to reach standards, for student work in all content areas.
 - While goal setting is visible throughout the school, the quality of the concrete next steps and authentic targeted feedback that the Teachers College Writer's Workshop model provides to students is not yet seen, with as great a level of rigor, outside the realm of English language arts.
 - The use of student math journals, a newly implemented initiative designed to support mathematical comprehension, is not yet deeply ingrained, and is just beginning to provide another avenue for teacher commentary.
- Develop structures that enable teacher teams to share evaluations of successful strategies school-wide, in order to expand the positive impact of the inquiry approach across all grades.
 - The school-wide collaborative process of teacher team inquiry, though newly initiated, has already begun to uncover some successful strategies. No protocol exists, however, that enables teams to easily share findings and reasons for success with colleagues across grade levels, limiting impact and restricting the opportunity to build teacher capacity.
- Develop the capacity of all staff members to use technological systems effectively for collecting and monitoring data on student progress to ensure that the information is used effectively in the collaborative team process.
 - While the school provides professional development in the use of ARIS and the technology involved in interim assessments, a small number of teachers are still insecure in this arena. They are dependent on the data specialist to provide them with needed information, limiting their ability to work on their own to reflect on student needs or to utilize technology in a timely fashion to provide strategic support.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Pacific School	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed