

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**The Ida Posner School
Elementary-Middle School 165
76 Lott Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Fran Ellers

Dates of review: April 13-14, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Donald Conyers

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Ida Posner School is an elementary/middle school with 649 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 91% Black, 8% Hispanic, 1% White students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 91.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

School leaders continue to analyze important information that reveals areas of concern, strength and accomplishments in student personal growth and achievement across the school. Understanding the importance of data led the principal to launch a campaign to ensure that students feel safe and look forward to coming to school to receive a quality education. Students reported, "We notice a change and hope that it continues for the rest of the year." An important cause of the change hinges on the school's efforts to create a dynamic professional development support system that considers the anticipated growth of teacher pedagogy as well as the impact that teachers have on student progress. Teachers work together to create support structures that allow for exploration, problem solving, knowledge-sharing and planning. As a result they are more confident about their practice and clearer about what they still need to do to improve. In spite of this teacher improvement, there are inconsistencies from classroom to classroom with regard to ensuring that instructional decisions promote higher levels of academic rigor and engagement for all students and viable entry points to learning for all subgroups.

School leaders work diligently providing services and experiences to advance teacher performance. However, they have not deepened the evaluation of teacher professional activities. This thwarts efforts to deliver precise levels of support and to understand teacher progress. Teachers and teams use a variety of mediums to understand assessment results and set meaningful learning goals for specific groups of students. They use the results and goals to aid in the tracking of student progress. School leaders continue to monitor student progress and teacher team activity, but do not regularly rely on interim goals to inform the effectiveness of teacher practice relative to realizing established learning goals. This minimizes opportunities to make corrections or adjustments and to appreciate measured student gains.

The school community regularly uses tools to ensure comprehension of student performance trends in areas of importance to the school. This informs the work of committees and classroom teachers, and leads to instructional adjustments that are designed to improve student performance. However, the school has not fully strengthened its ability to equip parents and students with proper data and information to support the acceleration of student learning. This diminishes their active participation in student improvement efforts.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Leaders analyze a multitude of data and demonstrate understanding of this information, identifying areas of strength and improvement at the school level.
 - The principal effectively uses a wide array of data sources, including Acuity, Mclass, similar school comparisons, and benchmark exams to understand student progress across all core subjects. This has led to a school-wide writing campaign, after-school programming for science education, resulting in evidence of improved outcomes for most subgroups across the school.
 - The special education population is a group of particular focus within the school. The principal, classroom teachers, and a teacher team examine goals, instructional plans, and student assessments to create a broad picture of student progress of this group. Teachers create work station demonstrations to highlight the student work being done and the anticipated next steps. Evidence of improved reading and writing habits are readily apparent in student outcomes.
- The school, in response to data, continues to develop and fortify an environment that clearly supports student academic and personal growth.
 - The school's most recent learning environment survey [LES] highlighted student concerns with bullying and safety. In October 2009, and again in March, 2010, the school responded with a student survey that presented the identical and relevant questions from the LES. October baseline results were similar to Spring LES survey results. Subsequently, the principal instituted a values program and employed Connect with Kids to support the noted concerns. March survey results, coupled with school safety data, showed more students feeling safe.
 - Students indicated clearly that they are known by a responsible adult who helps with problems and school work. The school created advisory, boys and girls clubs, supplemented by guidance counselor availability to ensure that students can access a caring person to support their needs. Students respond to this. During the quality review, many students also flocked to the principal for assistance, as a matter of routine. Thus, more student needs are met because staff are so attentive.
- Individual teachers and teams develop meaningful learning goals for targeted students that promote increased student learning and improvement gains.
 - A teacher team generated a long term goal for special education students in the area of reading comprehension. The goal-setting led to teacher discussion and shared of ideas around determining the best instructional approach, and ultimately, assessment outcomes improved as a result.
 - Writing has been identified as a school-wide area for improvement, and setting this goal has had significant impact on classroom practice. Teachers and the curriculum team generate the writing focus and writing goal each month and present a coherent approach to facilitating the

writing while highlighting grammar, literacy skills and specific themes; for example, “Hispanics on the move” coupled with persuasive writing, fact and opinion and Cesar Chavez. School benchmark assessments indicate growth in writing.

- The school has responsive professional development that engages staff and provides varied opportunities for professional collaborations that have improved teaching practices.
 - Teachers have time to meet formally and informally to discuss, share and support their learning needs. The principal leads study groups where they read books and implement practices in classrooms. After reading Results Now, teachers and school leaders responded by creating a curriculum team, common assessments and the conscious building of a professional learning community that supports strong classroom practice.
 - In addition to school coaches, teachers receive external support in areas of need within content areas from consultants and the UFT center. They are provided an array of topic support and relevant foci. School data led leaders to provide intensive professional development for teachers of special education English language arts and teachers of grade 5 in math. Teachers indicate that the extra focus and attention have improved their instructional approach and student interim exam results.
- School leaders, teachers and teams effectively use tools to organize and present student data that leads to the understanding of student performance trends.
 - The school leaders and teachers aptly use various tools to organize student learning results across the four core subjects. They discuss these results at grade level meetings, teacher team meetings and within the instructional cabinet. Grade leaders and school administrators analyze and aggregate the results so that gains and areas of need are clearly identified. Some of the more commonly used tools like unit exams and benchmark exams, in a pre/post examination comparison, uncover specific needs and growth in writing, non fiction reading comprehension and several science performance indicators. These areas quickly became foci for classroom and school level attention.
- Teachers have instituted a fluid and effective tracking practice which reveals student progress over time and supports opportunities for adjustments in instruction and goal setting.
 - The school pays close attention to learning goals and formative assessment results for the students with disabilities. It uses teacher observation, Achieve 3000, Language, and Acuity to follow student performance. This has focused teachers, and results have improved, especially in grade four.
 - The grade 2 teacher team is engaged in collaborative inquiry around questioning. Their goal includes teachers and students asking higher level, relevant questions and understanding how to use questions to gain deeper meaning. Teachers use their lesson plans, planned visitation to classrooms and student observation to track progress among teachers and students. Students have been asking better questions and showing the capacity to answer complex questions.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve reliance on significant data to determine the effectiveness of teacher practice and to make precise adjustments for continued improvement. (5.4)
 - Teacher teams and school leaders work avidly to unlock learning challenges amongst students. They look at instructional options and provide assessments to realize student growth. School leaders have not yet formalized structures to monitor teams in their work on aligning curriculum, instruction, organizational practice and assessment, in order to deepen teacher capacity and sustain student growth. This contributes to missed improvement opportunities.
 - The school has taken great steps to ensure that professional development is a crucial part of teacher growth. Leaders interpret data and create opportunities for teachers to receive support in areas of challenge. However, the school has not institutionalized the evaluation of professional development opportunities to ensure that teacher practice is improving, or that adjustments in support services can be made.
- Improve efforts to include more parents and students in meaningful experiences in order to promote improved student achievement.
 - The school plans and presents family night, parent meetings and trainings to include parents in school life. Parents report their satisfaction with the school and receive student progress reports, but fewer are able to speak about student learning challenges, ongoing progress, and how parents support the learning effort. This limits parents' participation in student improvement efforts.
 - Students present themselves as happy, appreciative members of the school family. They speak of the support from teachers, like advisory and conferencing, but many of the students do not demonstrate adequate levels of self-help and corrective practices that are needed to assess their progress and create options for improvement. The lack of this critical reflective practice thwarts independence in learning.
- Expand the established system for measuring progress toward goals in order to make the needed modifications over time to improve learning.
 - Teacher teams set long-term goals to facilitate student growth, and work well together to analyze data and track student growth over time. However, the work of the teams is not consistently anchored to interim goals. Although the work done over time relates to student need, the absence of consistent goal development limits the precision by which teams approach and gauge their effectiveness with students.
 - The school improvement plan accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses and expresses long and short term goals. Similarly, the professional development plan identifies pedagogical and content needs that are connected to goals. The school, however, has not fully developed a system for measuring progress towards professional development interim goals and can not know the fullest extent of needed changes for improvement.

- Fortify teacher decision making in order to adjust student learning tasks and to advance learner outcomes.
 - Classroom teachers consult their data and show evidence of planning. However, many of the observed classrooms reveal students insufficiently engaged so as to create the tension between known and unknown content and the necessary levels of challenge. Teacher decisions within lessons lead to more general levels of thinking and forfeit higher levels of thinking and engagement for all students. This limits student challenge and growth.
 - The school works well to support differentiation in the classrooms. Ongoing study focus and intra-visitation help teachers to improve in this area. However, the differentiation of instruction is not yet consistently implemented to support all subgroups. This limits student chances for enhanced academic achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Ida Posner School	Δ	▶	✓	+
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>	Δ	▶	✓	+
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>	Δ	▶	✓	+
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