

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**The Paul Robeson School**

**Elementary School 191**

**1600 Park Place  
Brooklyn  
NY 11233**

**Principal: Elsi Capolongo**

**Dates of review: May 10 – 11, 2010  
Lead Reviewer: Rhonda Hurdle-Taylor**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Paul Robeson School is an elementary school with 293 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 79% Black, 17% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 90.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

A dynamic principal, who is unwavering in her belief that distributive leadership facilitates teacher professional growth, leads The Paul Robeson School and parents to make decisions that result in continuous school improvement. Using a wide range of focused data to develop an understanding of individual and student group performance and progress, the staff works collaboratively to inform their practices and to monitor and revise instruction. This has led to coherence of instruction that encourages student achievement.

Strong systems and structures are in place to ensure a safe and nurturing environment where administrators and teachers know their students individually. Students report that they feel safe and supported and this allows them to focus on their academic achievements. Teachers are eager to work with students one-on-one during and after school to provide targeted support to meet their academic and social needs. However, the school has not sufficiently expanded community partnerships to support families in dealing with profound social issues. The school is clear in its value around “success at any cost” and students know what is expected of them in order to succeed. Parents are valued as an important part of the school’s development and appreciate the opportunities provided for them to be involved in decision-making that supports the school. Their ability to access a wide range of student data through ARIS Parent Link, class projects, progress reports, student assessments and homework assignments, ensure that there are no “surprises” when they meet with teachers. Still, parents do not take advantage of the support systems that ensure their children’s improved attendance.

The principal and assistant principal are strong instructional leaders who believe that each child benefits from exposure to a coherent curriculum inclusive of the arts and technology. The administrative team provides multiple opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development, which is influencing the quality of teaching and learning. The efficient utilization of organizational resources and school personnel supports teachers in their instructional practice. Teacher programs are deliberately set up to enable teacher teams to collaborate by grade level and across grades. This has helped teachers in the overall planning and delivery of their lessons. However, some teachers are still not comfortable using technology to enhance their lessons, and therefore do not offer students the opportunities to access the various technological tools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The curriculum offers a wide range of rigorous experiences including the arts, during and after school, to facilitate students' ownership of learning. (1.1)

The school's curriculum offers many opportunities for both lowest and highest achieving students to be involved in interdisciplinary units through project-based work that connect the arts with the core subjects. Classroom instruction shows strong evidence of higher order thinking and questioning. Student work is guided by rubrics that clearly demonstrate how students can produce high level work.
- There is an extensive amount of student artwork beautifully displayed throughout the school, including murals in and outdoors, that reflect the Blueprint for Arts standards. The arts curriculum is rigorous and provides many opportunities for all students to be engaged. Students participate in violin, ballet, art, and puppetry and are given many opportunities to display their developing talents during assemblies. Students take pride in displaying their acquired artistic talents.
- The school is proactive in identifying additional funding sources and, this along with teacher input, supports effective decision-making around teaching and learning that accelerates students' academic and personal growth (1.3,)
  - It is the school's plan to ensure that all students are technologically literate prior to graduation. As a result the school has successfully obtained a few competitive grants, one of which is funding an early childhood and an upper grade computer lab.
  - The school allocates time for students and teachers to work collaboratively in a partnership with 144 Music and Arts. This allows students to benefit from varied opportunities to build their self-concept during the day and after school. Students state "...being on stage helps me feel good about what I can accomplish".
- Through regular use of a wide range of data, leaders and faculty have an understanding of individual student performance and progress by group and subject, which effectively informs instruction and organizational adjustments. (2.1, 2.2)
  - School leaders consistently gather, examine and share school-wide data in an effort to assess student progress. This facilitates the on-going monitoring and tracking of individual student success as well as students within subgroups, such as special education. As a result periodic assessments show fewer and fewer students scoring in level one.
  - Teachers make good use of the school's data system, inclusive of ARIS, Acuity, and ECLAS, as well as teacher-made tests and quizzes, in order to review student progress, modify student goals and classroom groups, and to adjust the curriculum as needed. The results demonstrate that students are making steady progress in math and English language arts.

- The school provides a safe and nurturing environment where students are engaged in learning and appreciate the high level of support they receive for their personal and academic development. (1.4)
  - The principal, assistant principal and guidance counselor know each family individually, and have developed a caring relationship with them. Students say that they “always know exactly who to go to if they have a problem”. The “Be Nice” committee meets daily to share their work with individual students and to discuss their academic and social progress. This helps to create a trusting relationship between the staff and the students that is supportive rather than punitive.
- The school maintains a supportive learning environment that conveys high expectations and works collaboratively with parents in an atmosphere of shared-decision making. (2.4, 3.4)
  - School leaders and faculty continuously engage parents in conversations regarding the academic progress of their children via letters home, phone calls, progress reports, ARIS parent link, and during parent conferences. Student portfolios, which include specific feedback to students on how to produce standards-based work, often serve as the basis for these conversations. As a result, parents are able to support their children in their academic progress.
  - The administrative staff, parent coordinator and teachers work closely with parents on the School Leadership Team, Parents’ Association and other ad hoc committees to make decisions around grant writing, adjustments to the curriculum, attendance improvement and other school-wide initiatives. Consequently, parents feel invested in these priorities and assist their school in meeting them.
- Professional collaboration is a high priority and faculty benefit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths as individuals and members of a professional learning community. (4.2, 4.3)
  - Grade level teams meet weekly to participate in collaborative inquiry work. They analyze student assessment, examine student work, make necessary modifications to the curriculum, and share strategies that work for targeted students. This level of distributive leadership allows teachers to be an integral part of the decision-making process, and helps them to better plan to meet the needs of their struggling students.
  - Professional development is often provided by lead teachers and outside consultants, and is driven by a collection of classroom data from formal and informal observations as well as teacher need as determined during grade leader meetings with the administrative staff. They include telephone conferences, conferences outside the school, model lessons, and classroom inter-visitations. These highly reflective practices are helping teachers to improve their craft.
- The principal and assistant principal’s positive leadership and goal setting are fully embraced by all staff, and are a driving force for continually improving student achievement. (5.3)
  - The principal and her assistant principal are both instructionally skilled and they each work with teachers to set interim goals and to establish a

six-week cycle for measuring student progress towards meeting their goals. Well developed data systems, consistently updated and reviewed, allow administrators and faculty to monitor and revise annual goals. These goals are driven by the school's coherent use of documents such as the Attendance Plan, the Learning Environment Survey and the Comprehensive Education Plan. This facilitates the establishment of high goals that lead to improved student learning.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Build upon the work already started with the attendance inquiry team to make student attendance a continued priority.
  - The attendance team collaborates weekly around targeted students to gauge their pattern of attendance and to monitor the effect on students' instructional progress. The school uses this data to analyze individual student performance and to ensure that families receive the necessary support and interventions to address their needs. However, this does not always lead to the level of parental involvement essential to resolving attendance issues.
- Extend the partnerships with your community links to continue to support families in their personal growth. (4.4)
  - The guidance counselor and the members of the "Be Nice" committee support students in their daily crises and conflicts with other students. They meet daily to talk about individual students and to strategize around ways to assist them with anger management, classroom behavior, grief, and the many other social issues that persists. However, the school has not yet built an on-going partnership with a community organization that can support the social issues that parents and students are struggling with on a day-to-day basis.
- Provide increased opportunities for teachers to develop technological skills so as to increase the use of technology by students across the school. (4.3)
  - The school is focused on ensuring that students are given the opportunity to have technology infused in their instruction. The technology teacher's program allows him to provide training for teachers who are not as technologically savvy. It also allows students to come to the technology lab to learn the appropriate use of the various technology tools. However, some teachers are still not comfortable providing students with technology instruction as they need additional training before they can extend the learning to their students in the classroom.
  - Teachers have unlimited access to smart boards and overhead projectors as a way to enhance their instructional practice. These tools allow them to plan lessons that are motivational to students and accommodate the variety of learning styles within their classrooms. However, not all teachers take advantage of professional development that would help them support their students learning in technology.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Paul Robeson School	△	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<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
<b>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.</b>				
<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

<b>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.</b>							
<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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>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.</b>							
<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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>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.</b>							
<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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>