

Quality Review Report

2009-2010

**New York City Academy for Discovery
Elementary School 306**

**95-16 89th Avenue
Queens
NY 11421**

Principal: Jennifer Flandro

**Dates of review: December 14- 15, 2009
Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

New York City Academy for Discovery is an elementary school with 230 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 2. The school population comprises 8% Black, 63% Hispanic, 5% White, 13% Asian and 10% multi-racial students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 94%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The principal of New York City Academy for Discovery beams as she tells the story of her new school and the growth to become an extremely warm and welcoming place where one parent states, "I like the many ways our children have to learn". The school has a 'discovery' theme and, based on recommendations from the previous year's Quality Review, has increased opportunities for students to engage in exciting and challenging hands-on discoveries in all content areas. Students are passionately supported and respected by faculty, who are interested in their learning and collaborate to ensure that learning is motivating, accelerated and sustained. The school consistently uses a wide range of assessment tools to analyze and evaluate student attendance, work products and performance. The close analysis of data, coupled with high quality assessments, ensures that the leadership and faculty can pinpoint with precision the specific learning needs of every child. At present however, there are no structures in place for teachers to provide feedback to students explaining what precise next steps they must take to improve their learning.

The principal takes the school's long-term goals very seriously. As a result, she ensures that all stakeholders take an active role in developing the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan. In addition to this plan, the school analyzes the Learning Environment Survey in a collaborative and thoughtful way in order to guide the school towards achieving its goals. Teacher teams and individual teachers engage in weekly meetings to analyze student data, evaluate its effectiveness and monitor student progress and performance. Students identified in need of additional assistance are provided with immediate support and their instruction is adjusted to accelerate their learning. Under the focused direction of the principal, the school has put effective structures in place so that teachers collaboratively review student work and engage in meaningful conversations related to student learning. The principal and teachers participate in on-going data analysis to strategically plan motivating and differentiated lessons to meet students' specific needs. While the school effectively uses data to provide structured professional development for teachers, it has no specific plan for new teachers. Consequently, their professional learning needs are not met through differentiated training and support. At this time, the school does not have external partnerships beyond the school day to extend students' social, emotional and academic growth. Teacher teams, the school leadership team, and cabinet meetings are effective systems through which school leaders and staff continually monitor long-term goals and measure student progress towards their personal interim goals.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The challenging and rigorous curriculum is aligned to State standards, and engages students in theme-based projects and lessons to promote higher order thinking and encourage their sense of discovery.
 - In accordance with the recommendation from the previous year's Quality Review, the principal and faculty make thoughtful and purposeful decisions across all grades and subjects to ensure that it addresses the school's theme of 'discovery'. Stimulating hands-on activities help students develop deep knowledge in the subject area, and make connections across disciplines and in their lives outside school. First grade students, for instance, were mesmerized as they participated in a science lesson that utilized hands-on manipulatives that enabled them to visualize and then explain the rotation of planets.
 - Individuals and groups, including the lowest and highest achieving students, students with special needs and English language learners eagerly engage in a challenging investigative science lessons, for example in making recycled paper, in order to accelerate their learning.
- The principal and her staff's effective work as a cohesive team has created a calm, respectful and orderly environment where all students learn.
 - The principal, her staff and parents work collaboratively to analyze the Learning Environment Survey to guide improvements and ensure that they maintain a collaborative small-school culture to support progress towards students' academic and personal development goals. As a result, interactions across the school are trusting and respectful.
 - The school expands the concept of discovery to include parents. Parents joyfully saunter in and out of their children's classrooms one Friday each month. They are able to observe teachers engage their children in hands-on science lessons, and non-fiction reading and writing activities. As a result of this school-wide initiative, the entire school becomes one large respectful learning community in which parents learn how to support the academic and social emotional learning of their children at home and students are interested, engaged and want to succeed.
- Through the regular use of a wide range of assessment tools, teachers strategically analyze summative data at all levels to monitor all students' performance accurately and adjust their instruction as needed.
 - MCLAS, ECLAS running records, Fountas and Pinnell level reading assessments all support the work that students do in their classrooms. The principal maintains a meticulously detailed data wall in her office that clearly highlights the reading and writing progress of every child in the school. The information is color coded to ensure high visibility. As a result, the school is able to make immediate strategic decisions about students who need additional support.

- The principal has developed an effective data tool to systematically track attendance data, enabling her to see each student's attendance record at a glance. Leadership and teachers also use ARIS, the school's tracking system. Consequently, they are able to make connections between students' academic progress and their time spent in school. Parents appreciate the continuous follow-up regarding their children's attendance and make a greater effort to ensure that students come to school regularly and on time.
- Rigorous data analysis systems in all subject areas inform goal setting at every level and involve all constituents.
 - This year, the school wrote their first Comprehensive Educational Plan, a process which, the principal explained, everyone took very seriously. The collaborative development of school's focused level goals and action plans are clearly reflected in the plan, and in all other planning documents to leverage changes that explicitly link to accelerated student learning.
 - The leadership, faculty and parents engage in school level institutes where they develop school goals and action plans in order to ensure that students are well supported in the direction that the school is moving.
- The school has excellent structures which enable teachers to collaborate and consistently analyze data, set goals, develop new strategies and review student work in order to accelerate student learning.
 - Teacher teams do exemplary focused and consistent work as they set interim goals, not only for students identified as a part of the target population group, but also for students who demonstrate their need for additional support. Weekly collaborations provide time for teachers to analyze student work, and to set goals for subgroups, students with special needs and English language learners. Therefore, teachers are able to develop differentiated lessons to address students' needs and motivate them to learn.
- Collaborative inquiry teams enable teachers to develop clear a understanding about the needs of students as they consistently evaluate and modify the curriculum to ensure that students make good progress.
 - Professional learning-community periods are well structured, and teacher roles are identified as they support one another effectively. During these scheduled weekly sessions, teachers develop common unit goals, examine student work and data, and create evaluation tools such as checklists and student-friendly rubrics. The principal also uses this time productively to arrange for teachers to engage in focused professional development based on student data. In an effort to build school and grade capacity, grade leaders serve on the principal's cabinet where they collaborate to develop inquiry team protocols to provide structure and coherence to each collaborative teacher team within the building. As a result of these distributed leadership structures, teachers are part of all major decisions that affect students across the school.

- The principal's clear and focused long-term planning is continually monitored, revised and communicated to all who join her in the work of ensuring that all students improve their learning and make progress.
 - The school implements thoughtful, formal assessments such as Fountas and Pinnell. A detailed chart highlighting students' growth in leveled reading is located in the principal's office and teacher data binders, and indicated on student progress reports. Classroom libraries afford students the opportunity to expand their reading skills while enjoying a variety of interesting books. All parents are excited by the progress their children make in the school, as students articulate clearly their present and anticipated achievements in reading.
 - The principal and faculty are conscientious in assisting students in need of additional support. The school is participating in the Foundations Response to Intervention pilot program. Foundations unit tests identify students in need of additional instruction and remediation. These students are allocated strategically to small groups, and their progress is monitored using Foundations "probes" and DIBELS assessments in grade 2. As a result of the principals' and teachers intervention strategies, struggling students benefit from immediate and well-planned adjustments to their instruction.

What the school needs to improve

- Implement a more structured system for teachers to provide feedback to students and their families explaining what next steps they must take to improve their performance.
 - In order to provide students with information regarding their performance on their work, the school implements developmentally appropriate rubrics that are differentiated based on their grade. However, not all students have developed reflective practices by which they can assess their own progress, or articulate next learning steps that can be clearly shared with families.
 - The school communicates with families about what is expected of students by providing attendance updates and all subject performance information on a consistent basis. However, the school has not yet built in a system to provide ARIS Parent Link training for parents. As a result, parents do not know how this tool can help them in better understanding their child's performance.
- Identify ways of creating partnerships and community collaborations to enhance students' personal and academic growth.
 - The school's service learning and character education program reinforces the value of being good citizens. At this time, not all teachers have been provided with professional development in this area. As a result of the positive student engagement in service opportunities, the principal plans to extend the professional development to a broader group of faculty members in order to sustain a safe and respectful school culture.

- The principal and faculty work well together to support students' social and emotional needs to improve their academic growth. However, presently the school does not offer students opportunities to engage in external partnerships that extend beyond the school day to further deepen their social and emotional growth and their academic performance.
- Expand opportunities for new teachers to use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes, and to engage in professional development that is diversified and aligned to their needs in order that they can be more effective in accelerating student learning.
 - Professional development is paramount to the school and is actively supported by the leadership and faculty. A next step for the school is to provide actionable feedback to support each teacher's professional development, based on the analysis of student data, student work products and classroom observations.
 - The school offers structured professional development that is aligned with the school's goals for all teachers. However, there is no professional development plan that specifically addresses the individual needs of new teachers. As a result, they lack differentiated support to help them become more reflective and evaluative about their practice, with a clear focus on improving student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: NYC Academy for Discovery	△	➤	✓	+
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