

Quality Review Report

2009-2010

Margaret Lindemeyer School

Elementary School 013

**191 Vermont Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10305**

Principal: Paul Martuccio

Dates of review: March 4 - 5, 2010
Lead Reviewer: Richard D. D'Auria

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Margaret Lindemeyer School is an elementary school with 794 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 22% Black, 35% Hispanic, 28% White, and 14% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 94%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The school recently underwent a successful transition in leadership, and a cohesive team now poises the school well toward continued future development. An effective teacher center and knowledgeable coaches support teachers well. A recent key organizational decision provides teachers with additional weekly meeting time that enables their effective collaborative inquiry work. A case study approach, whereby each teacher carefully monitors and studies the progress of a small group of students, makes the work even more meaningful by enabling teachers to conduct action research. Students are excited about learning and appreciate their supportive teachers and other staff. Teachers utilize a wide variety of data, which they organize well, noting key trends and areas in need of improvement. As a result, the school has a short list of clearly understood and articulated goals shared by the school community. Key among these is a cohesive focus on literacy, particularly comprehension skills around grasping main idea, where students are now exceeding school goals in improving their independent reading levels. The regular analysis and adjustments to the curriculum, coupled with an enrichment model approach, engages students through their own interests. Although there is much student work displayed in hallways, teachers do not currently use student work consistently as an instructional tool within their classrooms. There is also a lack of consistency in how work is evaluated using standards-based rubrics, the nature of feedback students receive and school-wide systems to evaluate this aspect of work.

Parents are actively engaged in the life of the school through a host of effective strategies. They are welcomed in a school that listens to and values their opinions on school decisions such as the school's widely successful "stop and drop" program. Most teachers use web-based tools that readily enable easy parent access. A viable parent association and leadership team provide venues for meaningful parental input into school decisions. The school advises parents of student learning goals and next steps through both conversations and letters that include resources to help them support their children. However, the process whereby students' progress in achieving their interim learning goals is evaluated and their goals are revised is unclear, with students unsure of how they transition from one goal to another based upon achieving skill proficiency.

Multiple partnerships include a community-based organization, several colleges, and a local philanthropic foundation that supplement opportunities for students to get extra help, obtain more individualized attention in class, and expand their community awareness through worthwhile charitable activities. Although teachers meet weekly by grade, the school does not currently have established structures to enable teachers to engage in cross grade articulation to support student transition as they move from one grade to the next, thereby impacting on instructional cohesion across the grades.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The first year principal effectively supports a collaborative community, where high expectations and teaching practice ensures optimal student learning in a safe and secure learning environment.
 - The new principal has wasted no time in working collaboratively with his assistant and coaches to become a cohesive team that effectively supports the faculty. A team-building retreat enabled an extended cabinet to evaluate the school's current practice and develop a plan of action for the future. Effective coaches and teacher center support teachers well, creating an inclusive culture of mutual respect, leading to progress toward school-wide goals.
 - Students are enthusiastic about their school and feel comfortable going to staff for assistance and support. They acknowledge the respect teachers have for them, and leadership's approachability. A student shared, "Teachers will talk...about our feelings" as another exclaimed, "This is the best school I've ever been to, more organized and with consequences for your actions!" The school celebrates student success through letters and assemblies. A safe and orderly environment is valued and maintained.
- Strategic use of time and resources provides teachers with opportunities for structured professional collaboration that supports student progress.
 - The strategic hiring of six substitute teachers enables the faculty to have an additional grade team-meeting period each week. This critically important organizational decision has enabled a vast majority of teachers to use the time well to engage in collaborative inquiry using data analysis.
 - Inquiry work is manageable and meaningful, leading to action research. Teachers effectively analyze data and test various instructional strategies, resulting in adjustments to their practice. They take ownership of two or more identified students as case studies and create student strategy groups focused upon needed skills that are leading to performance gains.
- The school provides an engaging, rigorous curriculum, where teachers continually revise content and sequence to meet students' interests and needs.
 - Teachers meet regularly to revise the curriculum, assuring alignment with State standards, rigor, and high levels of engagement. The arts are alive and cleverly infused into content through a team of six teachers who are developing interdisciplinary links between the arts and the school-wide social studies curriculum, thereby enabling all students to learn about immigration and diversity through the arts and to work with visiting artists.
 - The school effectively uses an enrichment model to actively engage both the lower and higher achieving students in developing higher-order thinking skills. One class chose insect study, using selected high interest books and an ant farm, to improve comprehension skills. Another class chose dance, engaging students in the dance of the butterfly. The result is highly motivated students, focused upon their skill development.

- School leaders and teachers effectively use a broad range of tools to gather, organize, and analyze data which guides meaningful planning and supports informed teaching practice to maximize student learning.
 - Teachers effectively use many assessments to pinpoint areas for improvement. Teachers College assessments, Acuity, mock State assessments, and conferencing notes enable teachers to ascertain students' next steps strategically. Teachers note patterns of understanding around grasping main idea and math estimation. Consequently, grade teams incorporate related skill development strategies into every grade, with increases in reading levels.
 - Careful analysis by leadership of summative data led to the current school-wide emphasis on literacy, with a particular focus on main idea. Further subgroup analysis led to a focus on attendance of special education students, which lags the rest of the school population, leading to differentiated letters related to number of days of absence and the use of high levels of personal contact as well as an automated phone system.
- The school communicates high expectations by keeping parents well informed of their children's progress and next learning steps and actively engages them in school decision making.
 - Teachers increasingly use web-based tools that enable parents to easily access information about their child's progress. The school also regularly sends letters to keep parents well advised of next learning steps. The communication includes student goals and resources to support parents and encourage reciprocal information from them. Parents exuberantly report their children are extending goals to other aspects of their lives.
 - Parents are actively engaged in school decisions through an active leadership team and parent association, with input on budgetary and similar school-wide decisions. They have an active voice in a school that appreciates their input, as in the implementation of the successful "stop and drop" program, which many parents use to have conversations with administration and staff on their child's way in and out of school each day.
- Effective analysis of data has led to a short list of clearly articulated and widely supported school goals that strategically guide future development.
 - The school has clear, consistent, and cohesive goals. Key among them is improving students' reading comprehension. Each grade is working on a skill set that supports the school-wide goal and implementation is evident. Currently, 80.7% of students are attaining one year of progress in their independent reading level, far exceeding the school's goal of 52%.
 - The school's Comprehensive Educational Plan clearly articulates well-defined goals, directly linked to measureable gains in student achievement, accompanied by meaningful action plans that identify responsible individuals with time lines for accomplishment.
- Several partnerships provide students with high levels of extended learning opportunities and supports that enable them to engage in a variety of community activities thereby raising their social awareness.

- The school works closely with a community-based organization to supplement services to students in an after-school program offering arts and crafts in a caring atmosphere. An after-school academy provides additional support to students with test taking skills. The school soon plans to include academic intervention providers on its inquiry team.
- Several colleges provide a cadre of student teachers who take an active role in many classes, thereby providing students with more individualized attention. A local foundation facilitates student collection and distribution of food for the needy, enhancing their sensitivity to community needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Enable teachers to make consistent use of rubrics in evaluating student work as a classroom instructional tool and as a focus of their own professional development to improve alignment of practice.
 - The link between teacher practice and student work is sometimes the focus of professional development. The school currently displays student work primarily in hallways. There is sparse student work posted in classrooms. As a result, students miss opportunities to gain insights from each other's work into next learning steps to meet and exceed standards.
 - Although teachers discuss student work during grade meetings, use and application of rubrics and actionable written feedback to students across grades and subjects is inconsistent. The school does not currently have embedded systems to evaluate and adjust student assessment practices, resulting in a lack of school-wide coherence.
- Evaluate, refine, and embed transparent and consistent systems whereby students evaluate their progress toward interim goals more regularly to accelerate skill proficiency.
 - Teachers use various approaches to help students manage goals, but current systems lack transparency or coherence. Students are not all sufficiently aware of how and when they transition from one goal to the next, and their goal folders reveal missing entries. Conversations with students indicate a lack of clarity around goal revision and transition.
 - The school makes good use of formative and summative assessments to track its overall progress, but inconsistencies in tracking student interim learning-goals result in a lack of clarity at the classroom and student level.
- Develop systems to evaluate and align instructional practices across grades to enhance school coherence and facilitate student transitions.
 - The school's effective grade teams regularly evaluate and adjust curricular and instructional practices. However, the school lacks structures to enable teachers to meet routinely for cross-grade articulation to facilitate student transition. Consequently, student articulation from one grade to the next is not as seamless as it could be, limited to teachers passing on records as students move from grade to grade. This means that students do not hot the ground running.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Margaret Lindemeyer 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>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
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							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed