



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Division of Performance and Accountability
2010-2011**

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

The School for Discovery and Exploration

Elementary School K503

**330 59 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11220**

Principal: Bernadette Fitzgerald

Dates of review: February 8 – 9, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Linda Trifon

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School for Discovery and Exploration is an elementary school with 844 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 75% Hispanic, 3% White, and 19% Asian students. The student body includes 56% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 95%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school makes informed and effective organizational decisions to support improvements in teaching and learning, resulting in greater student achievement.
 - The school uses resources to create triads of teachers to meet the needs of students. There are Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) classes on every grade wherein special education teachers and general education teachers provide instruction throughout the day. Teachers are released to analyze student outcomes, discuss strategies and plan next steps, increasing collegiality and accelerating student progress.
 - School leaders make strategic decisions about teacher assignments. The principal paired up experienced teachers with inexperienced teachers to increase instructional cohesion. Grade liaisons as well as the mathematics and literacy coaches meet with teacher triads on an on-going basis. Teachers discuss student strengths and weaknesses resulting in heightened collegiality. One teacher stated, “We have a shared responsibility for all kids.”
- Teams of teachers gather and analyze student assessment data to determine the strengths and needs of students and make informed instructional decisions.
 - Data analysis is embedded throughout the school. Following a protocol, the presenting teacher discusses a student’s strengths and areas of need. The team analyzes the student’s latest running records, reading levels, writing samples, and mathematics assessments. Together, teachers determine an instructional strategy, adjusting curriculum to meet the needs of the identified student. When asked what the impact of this work was, one teacher shared, “It gives us space to look at a student in depth and collaborate as a team.” As a result, teachers are able to differentiate tasks to meet the needs of specific students.
 - Teams of teachers gather and analyze classroom data and design assessments to determine next instructional steps for students. For example, the English as a second language team was comparing students’ responses across reading bands to determine students’ ability to interpret and infer. Teachers determined the connections students are making, enabling them to create assessments and identify specific strategies to differentiate instruction.
- The school provides an array of professional development opportunities for teachers which results in accelerated student growth.
 - Classroom observations, the analysis of student work and conversations with teachers inform the school’s professional development plan. In addition to formal observations, school leaders provide “snapshots” of instructional practice. Written feedback on formal observations and snapshots include commendations and recommendations for next steps that promote professional growth and improve classroom instructional practices aligned to student work.
 - School leaders provide varied support to teachers. The school uses Charlotte Danielson’s teacher framework, as a tool to differentiate support for individual teachers. School leaders and teachers determine which domains teachers are

strong in and which domains need refinement. Thus, teachers identify professional goals and an appropriate plan of support is agreed upon.

- The school communicates high expectations that improve student performance and increase parental involvement.
 - “This school has high expectations, absolutely, in everything they do,” exclaimed a parent. Expectations for academic success, positive character development and good attendance are shared via the school’s parent guide, weekly newsletters and very frequent workshops. Students attend parent teacher conferences where progress and expectations are discussed and goals established. The school’s Parent Reporting Tool, provides families with academic expectations for each grade that includes tips and techniques on how to provide support at home. Consequently, parents provide focused support to their children ensuring academic success.
 - Parent involvement is encouraged, supported and promoted. This is a vibrant community school where parents are active partners. The school’s Parenting Journey program provides a platform for parents to reflect and share parenting skills. “Parents Beyond Borders,” reaches out to new immigrant families to help them assimilate into the culture. One parent shared, I was invited to speak at a faculty meeting to discuss my life experience as an immigrant and a learner.” Another parent shared, “There’s an empowerment of parents.” As a result, parents feel a strong partnership between school and home leading to increased involvement and an increase in academic performance.
- A positive school tone supports the academic, social and personal growth of teachers and students that has resulted in increased student performance.
 - “We have a culture of learners where staff and kids are willing to be public about learning,” said the principal. Analysis of the Learning Environment Survey (LES), attendance reports, and referral incidents inform the school’s goal setting. Teachers have established professional goals and work toward achieving them. Students discuss their learning and self-monitor their success resulting in heightened independence and self-management of learning.
 - The school’s structure of triads provide multiple opportunities for teachers to come together to analyze and discuss student learning outcomes to pinpoint support to enhance academic and emotional growth. Students are engaged in their learning. One student shared, “When goals are completed, we work on another one.” As a result, students have a heightened sense of ownership of learning and work diligently to excel.
- The school’s internal systems and effective partnerships with community-based organizations support the social, emotional and academic needs of students.
 - The school’s vision to raise student awareness of tolerance and self-respect fosters a climate where students develop habits of mind. Charts are on display throughout the classrooms and consultants visit classrooms to teach students strategies that promote respect. As a result, a social and academic tone leads to heightened student success.
 - The effective relationships with community-based organizations provide support to students and families. The Center for Family Life and Lutheran Hospital

provides counseling to students and families. Dentists provide dental care to students ensuring they are healthy and fit. The school's Even Start program supports newly-arrived immigrant families with job-related skills. These supports ensure that students are reading, willing and able to be successful, which results in accelerated student learning and emotional growth.

- School leaders evaluate the effectiveness of structured collaborative teams to build capacity and provide professional support to ensure instructional coherence.
 - School leaders regularly participate in teacher team meetings to provide support and give direction to teams ensuring that appropriate instructional strategies are planned, adjustments to the curricula made and benchmarks set. The consistency of meetings and the collaboration between administrators and faculty enables the school to build coherence across the school improving performance.
 - Weekly meetings with coaches enable school leaders to provide support to teachers as they hone in on their facilitation and leadership skills. Teachers identify areas where they want to lead and the school provides opportunities. For example, in the Wednesday professional development sessions, teachers take on leadership roles and receive feedback from the coaches and/or school leaders resulting in an increase of adult capacity.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that there is instructional coherence across all grades and subject areas to improve student performance and close the achievement gap.
 - The school has aligned its curriculum to the State standards. However, they have not aligned curricula across all grades and subject areas to emphasize key standards in order to close the achievement gap. Additionally, tasks are not planned with great specificity across all grades and subject areas, to meet the needs of targeted subgroups. Hence, all students are not consistently challenged and engaged to increase performance to close the achievement gap.
- Strengthen pedagogy to ensure that instruction is strategically differentiated to rapidly accelerate student learning.
 - As of yet, learning experiences are not strategically differentiated across all classrooms and grade levels to ensure that all learners have multiple entry points and enriched extensions for high achievers, to heighten levels of student engagement to maximize learning and accelerate progress. Consequently, students miss opportunities to challenge them to higher learning outcomes.
- Build upon the school's action plan to create a long-term transitional academic program for new arrivals and struggling students to accelerate learning.
 - As of yet, the school has no specific action plan to support the influx of second language students and special education students, hampering their efforts to increase academic learning and promote social emotional growth. The analysis of existing instructional and organizational practices with regard to college-readiness expectations is not fully in place, thus hindering instructional strategies to accelerate student learning.

School name: The School of Discovery	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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

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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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			
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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			
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed