



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

The Liberty School

Elementary School 089

**201 Warren Street
New York
NY 10282**

Principal: Veronica Najjar

Dates of review: March 10 – 11, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Daria Rigney

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Liberty School is an elementary school with 545 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 10% Hispanic, 62% White, 18% Asian students, 1% American Indian and 5% Multicultural. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 96.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has designed and implemented a highly engaging curriculum for all students with a heavy focus on developing students' curiosity and inquiry skills.
 - Curricular units of study are meticulously mapped out with a clear emphasis on standards that target reading and writing for information, understanding and critical analysis. This seamless approach towards in-depth studies provides students with multiple opportunities to synthesize information, analyze multiple perspectives, and design models.
 - Both short assignments and long-term project work are based on an in-depth analysis of student work. Teacher-created texts ensure all students access to the sophisticated and engaging curricula across the grades.
- All teachers share a belief system grounded in the centrality of collaborative, project-based learning for all students.
 - Students in all classes work in a variety of collaborative configurations including partnerships, small groups, and independent work. This results in a vibrant, interactive school culture as well as a seamless approach to student learning embraced by the entire staff.
 - In all classes, there is strong evidence of differentiation. In all math classes, students solve problems at different levels of challenge, including combining numbers in grade 1 and making arrays in grade 3, resulting in students working and practicing to consolidate critical concepts at their own level of development.
- The principal makes strategic decisions that optimize resources in the service of attaining current and long-term school goals.
 - School goals effectively drive the work of teacher teams. The principal's allocation of time for them to meet, analyze data, plan assessments, and target instructional strategies, results in demonstrated improvements in reading data for students.
 - The principal creatively uses resources to provide after-school support for English language learners in a play-based group setting during which students have opportunities to engage in dramatic play and board games in addition to academic work. This has resulted in students practicing and improving their skills in speaking and listening.
- The school actively gathers and analyzes a wide repertory of formative data in creating a complete picture of students' strengths and needs.
 - Teachers use periodic assessments to analyze student mastery of concepts and reflect on the effectiveness of curriculum. A grade 3 team shared the results of their classroom assessment in reading

comprehension, their subsequent development of a more refined assessment, and their plans to adjust the curriculum to more strategically meet student's needs revealed through their work.

- Teams of teachers routinely meet to review and assess student work products, many of which are long-term project that reflect the extensive units of study. These discussions anchor the development of assessments that give a complex portrait of students' needs in skills, content, and process, as evidenced by teacher created rubrics.
- The principal's active and energetic presence in classrooms, and ongoing observations of teacher practice, guarantee continuous growth and reflection among the staff.
 - The entire staff embraces the school's focus on thematic studies and project-based instruction as evidenced by the astute selection of student-friendly topics, the quality and type of assignments, and the supports firmly in place to ensure all students' access to this engaging and authentic curriculum. As a result of this deeply embedded school wide culture, teachers transition seamlessly across grade assignments.
 - The principal has an encyclopedic and intimate knowledge of the teachers' needs based on her daily presence in classroom, frequent formal and informal observations, close collaboration in grade meetings, as well as her careful examination of data. This has resulted in a finely tuned plan for teacher support and professional development tailored to teachers' demonstrated needs.
- The school goals, generated and implemented by the entire community, drive a clear and compelling vision for school improvement.
 - The school's deeply held belief in the power of real world inquiry to accelerate students' learning informs its goals whether in improving the reading skills of lower achieving students, enhancing the number and quality of teacher teams, or meticulously studying Common Core State Standards in order to design higher-level tasks. All three of these goals are firmly rooted in the school's well-developed theory of action.
 - The principal has established planning days for teachers throughout the year, conducts frequent cabinet meetings that involve all grade levels, manages ongoing communications with parents and parent leaders, and writes frequently to all members of the community. Thus, she involves the entire community in goal-setting and planning processes.
- The principal and her staff continuously review the effectiveness of curricular and instructional decisions in order to improve the quality of student outcomes.
 - Teachers meet at regular intervals to reflect on the effectiveness of curricular studies. At these times, teachers assess their effectiveness in communicating critical concepts by evaluating student work. This results in an ongoing cycle of revision and planning.
 - One teacher team has as its responsibility the evaluation of the math curriculum in anticipation of the implementation of common core

standards. As a result, teachers are reflecting on their capacity to provide instructional expertise in more complex student tasks and sharing their needs for additional professional development.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve systems for evaluating the effectiveness of teacher teams and structured professional collaborations.
 - While all teachers are deeply involved in a variety of engaging professional collaborations, comprehensive systems to evaluate the impact of their work on student achievement is not yet fully evident. Consequently, the work of teacher teams is somewhat limited in its maximizing its effect on classroom practice.
 - The principal has significant experience in hiring teachers and developing the capacity of her staff. However, at this time, the school does not use a full complement of assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of the principal's decisions with regard to student achievement.
- Generate a flexible collection of tools to improve the school's ability to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends across all subgroups.
 - While teacher teams gather and analyze a broad menu of data, their tools do not lend themselves to capturing performance trends across all subgroups. As a result, the school is hampered in its ability to serve some sub-groups, specifically the highest achieving students, with increasingly challenging extensions to projects.
 - Individual teachers maintain extensive data, particularly in the form of conference notes, on their students' progress in all subjects. However, at this time, they do not use tools that improve their ability to flexibly manipulate the data to reveal subtle and detailed information on trends and patterns in student achievement among all subgroups.
- Establish more in-depth systems for evaluating the effectiveness of data collection and analysis in order to improve instructional coherence.
 - The school has multiple ways of assessing students in all subjects. However, at this time, the staff does not have a cohesive system in place for evaluating the link between assessments of students' projects and more traditional summative and formative assessments thus impeding their ability to clearly delineate students' next learning steps.
 - Although the school collects and analyzes an impressive array of data, they have not fully explored the impact of their data systems on student achievement. In math, the school does an in-depth analysis of four State test questions, interpreting students' knowledge base, and assessing their needs. However, at this time, there are limited systems in place to evaluate the impact of this work in promoting and creating instructional coherence.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: The Liberty School	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

△	Underdeveloped	➤	Developing	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
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