



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Independence School

Elementary School 234

292 Greenwich Street

Manhattan

NY10007

Principal: Lisa Ripperger

Dates of review: November 17 – 18, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Gwen Stephens

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Independence is an elementary school with 820 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 7% Hispanic, 70% White, and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance in 2008 – 2009 was 96 %.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty, design engaging, and coherent curricula, (including the arts), that emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills for a variety of learners and are aligned to State standards.
 - The school has developed an innovative, rich, and diverse curriculum that includes interdisciplinary links and project-based learning, which reinforces student progress by making interesting connections between core subjects. Collaborative team teaching supports special education students. Art, individualized music lessons, and dance opportunities through National Dance Ensemble provide a myriad of opportunities for students to pursue their talents and interests.
 - The principal's leadership team guides the development of effective teacher designed curriculum maps and unit plans across grades and content areas to ensure a cohesively aligned program. There are suitable and regular revisions to adjust pacing and incorporate sufficient entry points for all learners to be successful.
- Across the school, teachers engage in differentiated classroom practices that provide opportunities for multiple entry points for students to engage in the learning process.
 - There are consistent classroom strategies that reflect differentiation by process, content, and product. Students work in small groups, partnerships, and one-on-one with teachers to receive extra support. Effective questioning promotes critical thinking and accountable talk, which supports high levels of student engagement. Students, choose assignments that allow multiple opportunities to demonstrate understanding of learning goals. Student work folders reflect tiered support for students that extend thinking and addresses individual learning needs. As a result, of these practices, students are motivated, enthusiastic and student performance is high.
- The principal is a strategic manager who makes purposeful organizational and instructional decisions aligning resources to support goals and collaboration that improve academic outcomes.
 - The wise use of school's budget and thoughtful scheduling allows teacher teams to meet weekly, and two on-site coaches to meet with teachers on a regular basis to analyze data and reflect best classroom practices and create exemplar lesson plans. Comprehensive planning cycles occur and substitute teachers cover classes thus ensuring a horizontal and vertical focus. Strategic pairing of teachers in collaborative team teaching classes, as well as looping teachers with their students as they move up to the next grade reflect an emphasis on strategic teacher assignments to ensure meeting instructional goals.
 - The school's major priority is the integration and use of technology to support organizational planning. This allows staff access to information, expand school and community communications, and enhance classroom practices. Teachers use electronic desktop document readers, to support shared and guided reading instruction during the reader's workshop.

- The school has established successful external partners and developed internal capacity to support its staff and integrate youth services to provide on-going learning to accelerate student's academic and personal growth.
 - Implementation of "quality control" is an effective means to identify, deliver, and restructure services to all students, with a focus on those who may be at risk and those with special needs. This process includes the alignment of academic supports and social emotional interventions through the pupil personnel team, school based support team, and the guidance counselor. As a result, the school consistently gains credit for closing the achievement gap for students.
 - The school's provides effective professional development for parents and staff around creating a safe, inclusive respectful culture through workshops led by Linda Lantieri, author of "Building Emotional Intelligence." This is supportive of the school's goal to foster strategies for nurturing individualism and rigorously increase academic outcomes.
- The principal and her cabinet work cohesively collecting and examining a range of data to understand performance trends and create a concise picture of the school's areas of strength and areas of need.
 - The school uses an extensive array of attendance, referral, discipline, and student support services data to supplement summative assessments to track the progress of students across grades. This year, the school identified that in stark contrast to 75% of students scoring correctly on multiple-choice selections on the State exams only 21% received full credit in writing.
 - The school creates a customized item analysis bank to target specific skills that students have not mastered. This allows the school to track student progress on the State exams. It informed this year's school-wide goal setting to allow for deeper discussions during guided-reading to enhance comprehension in order to improve the quality of student writing.
- The principal communicates a clear vision for the future that supports on-going progress and engages the entire school community to focus on accelerating student learning.
 - As the principal believes that student achievement comes first at PS 234, this underscores her communication of well-defined school level goals and action plans specifically linked to accelerating performance. Planning processes such as Comprehensive Education Plan planning, faculty conferences, grade team meetings, and parent association meetings, are transparent, and generate broad support for the school's vision and specific strategies for improvement linked to instructional goals and decision-making.
 - The principal defines school goals through an extensive array of data. During teacher team meetings and the the school's leadership team meetings, teachers review data, adjust and revise curriculum maps and lesson plans as well as identify clear next steps. This ongoing process ensures that goals are frequently revisited to address improving student outcomes.
- The school's effective systems monitor teacher practice leading to improved instruction at a pace that broadly impacts student achievement school-wide.
 - Administrators and faculty's common school-wide instructional focus includes the elements of a coherent, rigorous balanced literacy framework that drives the culture of teaching and learning. This reinforces and aligns with the timely feedback and

leadership of the principal, thus sharpening the consistency and effectiveness of teaching practices.

- New teachers at PS 234 receive intensive mentoring and coaching supports leading to a deeper understanding of successful school-wide practices. Additionally, the school provides all teachers with targeted constructive professional development and opportunities for personalized options outside the school to enhance their skills. As a result, professional collaboration and self-reflection is high and teacher pedagogy is constantly improving and benefiting students.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote greater coherence and consistency in the collection and use of classroom level data in order to improve strategic instructional decisions.
 - Teachers review student work, in-class assessments, balanced literacy assessments, running records, and anecdotal information to gain insights into student performance trends. However, the school has not yet fully embedded these practices to systematically collate and track areas of mastery for learning.
 - Teams of teachers have not yet developed expertise in designing assessments to thoroughly match daily classroom instruction and utilize “on the spot” information and data regarding student learning to sharpen lesson plans and further improve classroom instruction.
- Fine-tune the short- and long-term classroom level goals for identified targeted groups so that these students understand next learning steps and reflect on their own progress.
 - The school works to track progress and adjust instruction to meet individual student needs. However, classroom level goals reflect student conferencing and suggested next steps on a range of topics but do not clearly reflect targeted interim performance goals.
 - Students receive actionable feedback from teachers on their progress based on the evaluation of their work. However, this process and evaluation at the team level lacks structure and there are missed opportunities for increased support and enrichment for students.
- Develop a targeted list of measurable data based goals that guide the inquiry work for each team to ensure consistency of findings leading to the development of school-wide protocols.
 - Although the school has well established collaborative teacher teams, specific measurable criteria for team success to ensure the consistency of documenting findings as a school-wide protocol is not yet universally established.
 - Although teams meet regularly, there is informal ownership over the management of teams. There is not yet a clear, formal pathway to ensure leadership development to enable teams to become more self-directed, self-reflective and develop a deeper focus on student outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Independence 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

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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