

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Isobel Rooney Middle School**

**Middle School X080**

**149 East Mosholu Parkway  
Bronx  
NY 10467**

**Principal: Lovey Mazique – Rivera**

**Dates of review: October 25 – 26, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Sonia Menendez**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

Isobel Rooney Middle School is a middle school with 652 students from six through grade 8. The school population comprises 16% Black, 68% Hispanic, 6% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 30% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 88%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Leaders make informed and strategic organizational decisions that support the school's goals and result in improvement in student learning. (1.3)
  - In order to address literacy concerns, the principal hired an additional literacy coach who teaches, models and serves as a lab site. A third assistant principal was hired to support teachers with the collection and analysis of data. Professional organizations support the school in developing teacher pedagogy to further their skills. This has led to a professional development that is focused on improving outcomes for students. As a result, there is a more unified approach to teacher planning and student work products demonstrate improvement from their September baseline samples.
  - The principal reorganized the school into two small academies, led by an assistant principal with the distinct themes of digital media and performing arts aimed at appealing to its students. Teachers have been reassigned into teams that share responsibility for working with a manageable group of students to improve student achievement and school tone. As a result, serious incidents have been reduced and the quality of student work shows some improvement.
- The school gathers and analyzes a wide range of relevant data to identify trends and gain an overview of the school's strengths and needs resulting in a clear understanding of students' performance and progress. (2.1)
  - As part of its improvement efforts, the school employs an assistant principal whose primary role is to assist teachers in the development of data gathering and analysis. The school analyzed data from the Learning Environment Survey, formative and summative assessments to gain an overview of the school's strengths and areas of need. The careful analysis demonstrated that students would benefit from small personalized learning communities. School leaders used this information to develop the Academy of Digital Media and the Academy of Performing Arts resulting in a more focused support structure for students.
  - The school collects a wide variety of quality data from periodic assessments, end of unit tests and quizzes created by teachers in order to supplement State tests and gain a comprehensive view of how individual and subgroups of students are performing. As a result of this analysis, students are closely matched to specific academic intervention services to meet their needs and improve their level of achievement as evidenced by a decrease of students in Level 1 in Literacy and mathematics.
- The school provides extensive feedback and support to teachers that result in increased self evaluation and revision of instructional practice. (4.1)
  - A strong emphasis on teacher development lays the foundation for the professional development provided to staff. The principal and her

administrative team use frequent classroom observations to plan for improvements in instructional practice. New teachers benefit from feedback from supervisors as well as mentoring. As a result, new teachers cite how they feel supported by leaders and colleagues.

- The administrative team has embraced the use of a common framework to provide targeted feedback and identify individual professional development needs. The principal realized that feedback and professional development provided in the past did not always translate into change of practice. Therefore, through formal and informal observations teachers receive detailed feedback on specific areas of need such as in the area of questioning, which is a school-wide focus. Consequently, there is a concentrated effort on articulating clear expectations on “closing the knowing-doing gap” by more frequent monitoring visits to check on consistency of practice which is positively impacting student learning.
- Teachers and administrators benefit from highly personalized professional development that is targeted on achieving school-wide goals. (4.3)
  - School leaders recognize professional development as a key change agent for improvement. The professional development experiences are differentiated based on various factors including content, data, academy and individual needs with an eye towards implementation of the Common Core Standards and academic tasks. As a result, teacher conversation is focused on improved planning to support the school-wide goal of engaging students with rigorous academic tasks.
  - The school has strong partnerships with consultants that provide leadership support to staff and administration. The administration meets with consultants to explore leadership topics to strengthen their work as a team. Teachers’ weekly meetings are facilitated by assistant principals, coaches and lead teachers. As a result, the school is working to increase instructional leadership at all levels.
- The school communicates high expectations to the entire school community with a clear vision for improvement and increased student outcomes. (3.4)
  - Parents state that the school does a good job of keeping them informed through a variety of communication processes such as calendars, interim progress reports, emails and a phone messaging system. Parents are keenly aware of the high expectations the school has for their children. Parents speak highly of the education their children receive. They further appreciate the support of the parent coordinator who offers ample opportunities for parents to discuss how to help their children at home. As a result, parents feel they are well supported in how to help their children achieve.
  - Systems of support are in place to help students increase their level of achievement. All members of the school community share high expectations for what students can achieve. Students are constantly encouraged to wear their uniform and “dress for success” and perform at their best. Each academy has a guidance counselor to provide social/emotional support. Through advisories, teachers engage students

in conversation around academic and personal growth that is positively impacting student achievement and behavior.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Improve teacher pedagogy to increase the level of differentiation so all learners benefit from rigorous and challenging tasks resulting in increased student progress. (1.2)
  - The school expects teachers to use data to plan and provide differentiated instruction. A common planning template is used which asks teachers to indicate how they are differentiating for the variety of learners in their classrooms. However, across several classrooms differentiation of instruction, questioning or tasks are not consistently implemented. Therefore, not all students are provided with challenging tasks or scaffolds to support their learning.
  - Students in some classes benefit from working in cooperative groups and questioning strategies that foster accountable talk. However, across classrooms there is uneven level of consistency of effective grouping and structures for student participation. As a result, not all students are engaging in high level conversations or producing meaningful work products because lessons and activities do not sufficiently engage and motivate students at all levels of achievement.
- Strengthen the alignment between academic tasks and curriculum so that lessons emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills to positively impact student performance. (1.1)
  - The school developed units of study using the Common Core Learning Standards as their guide. Literacy teachers are all following a unit of study focused on characterization. However, all teachers are not yet sufficiently skilled in implementing differentiated and rigorous learning opportunities for all students resulting in lessons that do not consistently challenge higher performing students or appropriately scaffolded to support struggling students.
  - During the summer, a team worked together to develop units of study aligned to the Common Core Standards with academic tasks designed to engage a variety of learners. A common planning template was developed to support teacher instructional practice. However, not all teacher teams have begun to use student work to inform refinement of the unit and learning tasks to ensure that there is a clear understanding of where students are and what they need so that all students are aptly engaged.
- Monitor teachers' use and analysis of assessments to support alignment with the curriculum that leads to adjustment of instructional practice. (2.2)
  - One of the responsibilities of the newly hired assistant principal is to support teachers in the gathering and analysis of data. Teachers use baseline assessments and rubrics aligned to the units of study. However, the information is not yet sufficiently used to evaluate the effectiveness of

classroom level, curricular and instructional decisions leading to adjustments to ensure increased student gains. (2.2)

- Teachers make use of supplemental data such as periodic assessments, end of unit tests, quizzes and rubrics. However, they inconsistently use this information to attain a detailed view of the needs and strengths of student subgroups in order to support the learning of all students.
- Sharpen school improvement planning by identifying specific interim benchmarks with measurable outcomes against which progress can be measured and adjustments made. (5.3)
  - The school has developed concrete plans for improvement. Teams met over the summer to identify goals set to raise the achievement level of students. However, systems for measuring progress towards interim goals are not yet securely in place; this undermines the clarity of where improvements are needed.
  - Teachers develop goals for themselves and their students. Goals are related to deficient skills yet lack interim checkpoints and timeframes to monitor progress and make timely adjustments. Therefore, progress towards attainment of goals is hard to measure.
- Build on the supports and collaboration with families and community based organizations to ensure a consistently safe and orderly building resulting in increased outcomes for children. (1.4)
  - A general tone of respect permeates the school. The principal took into account the Learning Environment survey where teachers and students indicate a lack of safety and order and has reorganized the school into two learning academies with additional support personnel to positively impact student behavior. However, transitions continue to be a challenge and students cite incidents of fighting and bullying during lunch and in the school yard.
  - The principal has worked diligently to get more youth development and guidance support for the students. However, attendance continues to decline and a high level of mutual trust and respect is not yet fully realized.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: Isobel Rooney Middle School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?		<b>X</b>		
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?		<b>X</b>		
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?		<b>X</b>		
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			<b>X</b>	

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		<b>X</b>					
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?		<b>X</b>					
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		<b>X</b>					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>