

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Dr. Roland N. Patterson School / IS 229  
275 Harlem River Park. Bridge  
Bronx, N.Y. 10453**

**Principal: Dr. Ezra B. Matthias**

**Dates of review: February 29 – March 1, 2012  
Lead Reviewer: Dolores Esposito**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Dr. Roland N. Patterson School/IS 229 is a middle school with 232 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 46% Black, 54% Hispanic, 0% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 49% English language learners and 59% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 89%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty develop a safe environment to positively impact on students' social-emotional and academic development. (1.4)
  - The school has maintained a safe environment that promotes teaching and learning for students and adults. In between classes the hallway is filled with adults interacting with students positively to ensure that students are accountable for their academics and behavior. This school was previously sited as persistently dangerous, but has now implemented systems for supporting students with social emotional learning needs. Students feel very connected to their guidance counselors and social workers, whom they frequently interact with when needed. Support staff communicates with teachers and parents to follow up with individual students in terms of attendance and behavior. Many parents welcome the feedback they receive from teachers regarding their children's behavior through progress reports. In addition, they also feel that the school provides a safe environment for their children during and after school. Students attend soccer and basketball till after 9:00pm through the Police Athletic League. As a result, the discipline and tone in the school remains positive with a focus on social emotional and academic learning.
- School leaders gather various data sources to identify school-wide strengths and needs to better inform instructional gaps. (2.1)
  - The school's leadership gathers state assessments in English language arts and math as well as interim assessments given in October and January. In addition, data from Achieve 300, a program used to service English language learners, and other data for attendance is analyzed by the cabinet to identify areas for improvement. Some of these include a focus on student questioning techniques to promote critical thinking skills. As a result, teachers incorporate essential questions, skills and learning objectives in their lesson plans to better target student learning. Consequently, conversations during grade meetings focus on these findings.
  - An analysis of formative and summative data from periodic assessments and Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA) reveals inconsistency data patterns with students with disabilities and English language learners. As a result, the school has developed a 3-year plan to integrate the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) with Collaborative Learning Inc. and professional development from Kaplan. In addition, Achieve 3000 is used with English language learners. Based on data charts that were shared, this group of students is showing progress in language development.
- Parents receive key information that results in an open exchange and a shared commitment to the school's goals. (2.4)

- Parents benefit from regular communication from the school through monthly newsletters, school letters and phone calls regarding academics, behavior, attendance and celebrations. For example, one of the math teachers sends progress reports every two weeks with specific feedback and next steps for students. One of the parents indicates, “He is very creative with the kids”. Many parents are pleased to hear consistent information about their children’s habits. In addition, workshops are provided for parents on using ARIS to access student information. As a result, there is better communication and trust between parents and teachers, who embrace the school-wide goals.
- The school develops clear goals that align well with other planning documents that foster a collaborative school vision. (3.1)
  - The school develops clear school wide goals that align to the school’s comprehensive educational plan and other planning documents, including the principal’s performance goals. These are clearly communicated to all members of the school during faculty meetings, town hall meetings and grade conferences. For example, parents receive information about their children’s academics and behavior. As a result, there is shared understanding that school goals must support the academic and social emotional development of students. Progress reports and newsletters include information about academics and behavior. Consequently, the school’s leadership team and middle school council support these goals and communicate them to all constituents during monthly meetings.
- The school benefits from external partnerships that support postsecondary readiness. (4.4)
  - The school has developed effective partnerships with colleges to develop academic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Many students attend Monroe College and Bronx Community College on Saturdays from 9am until 2pm. In addition, there are after school enrichment opportunities for students in reading clubs for boys and girls and cooking classes. As a result, students indicate their eagerness to attend high school and college. Consequently, attendance has improved from 89.9 to 91.1%.
  - The Bronx Community College Educational Talent Search Program also supports students on Saturdays with study skills and time management skills. The guidance counselors are instrumental in following up with students and families to ensure that their academics and social emotional learning needs are met. They provide in classroom support with lessons on bullying and also focus on developing social skills. Counseling services are also offered to families after school so that they can better support their children. As a result, parents and students benefit from these opportunities to develop academic and social skills that will prepare students for high school and college.

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

- Develop rigorous curricula and academic tasks across subjects to ensure coherence and alignment to key standards. (1.1)

- Although school leaders and faculty are beginning to align their curriculum to the CCLS, there is not yet a cohesive curriculum that outlines key standards across the grades. For example, in English language arts, teachers plan weekly with minimal guidance on a process to revise their curriculum. Even though they use the school's curriculum mapper that includes content, skills and assessment, teachers state the need to have more professional development in curriculum development and alignment. Communication with administration around this process is not very clear at this time. Teachers do not always understand expectations for curriculum development and alignment. In addition, the themes throughout the grades lack specificity and grade level content. Academic tasks do not typically emphasize higher order thinking skills across the grades. The school has been utilizing a framework for organizing curriculum, but there is a lack of expertise and content knowledge necessary to effectively develop and revise curriculum. As a result, during classroom visits, students are generally compliant, but are not cognitively engaged in rigorous lessons that foster inquiry. Consequently, lessons typically do not have clear teaching points that are data based, with limited opportunities for students to access the curriculum effectively and practice skills needed to improve.
- Incorporate differentiated teaching strategies to promote critical thinking skills that accelerate student achievement. (1.2)
  - Teaching practices aim to target the structures in lesson design to include certain components that the school has identified as important. In math, teachers incorporate strategies to support thinking in math from Lucy West, a consultant sponsored by the network. However, across classrooms, lessons are generic and do not usually provide meaningful opportunities for differentiated learning. Teachers write the learning objectives on the board and encourage students to use thinking maps, but do not differentiate the activities for the various levels and learning styles. During classroom visits, students are not always clear about the purpose for learning or what are the connections to real life application. In addition, many of the tasks were the same for all students, which resulted in some students finishing assignments earlier while others still needed additional support. As a result, teaching practices and resources do not offer students the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions, inquiry or reflection. Student work products are not organized or readily available across classrooms. Some of the work that was reviewed lacks specificity and academic rigor. Student tasks in folders and during lessons lack clear expectations for learning with limited feedback given to students. Therefore, students are unable to check their work against standards based benchmarks, criteria or rubrics. This limits the opportunity for students to have ownership of their learning in order to close the achievement gap.
- Develop consistent practices to align assessments with curriculum and instruction to close the achievement gap. (2.2)
  - Teacher teams and individual teachers use a variety of assessments that are not strongly aligned with key standards and curricula. The school uses assessments from Achieve 3000, Acuity and end of unit assessments from the literacy and math programs used in the school.

However, they are not well aligned to the curriculum and are uneven across the grades and subject areas. Student work folders and teacher meetings reveal the inconsistency of criteria for assessments. As a result, the school is unable to effectively analyze data patterns to inform instructional decisions in the classroom or grade level. Therefore, they are unable to effectively identify the gaps in order to improve student performance.

- Across classrooms, teachers write tasks with learning objectives on the boards or charts. However, during the lessons, there are uneven opportunities for teachers to check for student understanding. Students are working in groups or independently, without a structured system to guide the quality of their learning. Criteria for tasks, rubrics and checklists were not frequently utilized during lessons or evident in student work samples. As a result, teachers are unable to make instructional adjustments to their lessons in order to meet the varied needs of their students.
- Use resources effectively to develop strategic systems to effectively monitor progress towards school goals. (1.3)
  - The school has invested some resources to support professional development for teachers and curriculum development called Collaborative Learning Inc. This is an instructional planner that facilitates curriculum mapping. For example, they have hired an Aussie consultant for math to support teachers in developing effective mathematical pedagogy. As a result, there has been some improvements in this content area, based on New York State assessments for math that reveal a 4% increase in student performance, currently at 31.7%. However, the budget does not always align well to the needs of the school. For example, there is a large amount of adults in and out of classrooms in a school with under 400 students. This could be a great opportunity to reduce the ratio of adults to students in order to improve and personalize learning. However, there is not a clear system of accountability to ensure that all adults are positively impacting student achievement across the school. As a result, there is not a system for assessing the effectiveness of programs, academic intervention services or progress for students. In addition, teachers currently do not have enough time to plan lessons with their colleagues. Grade meetings lack focus, and are usually planned in advance, with minimal teacher input in English language arts. Consequently, there are limited opportunities to engage students in high leverage tasks that promote critical thinking skills.
- Provide teachers with strategic feedback and comprehensive professional development opportunities to improve student outcomes in the school. (4.1)

School leaders provide guidance to teachers, including new staff members, through informal and formal observations. Teachers receive a wide range of written and oral feedback from the administrative team on classroom instruction and environment. However, there is not a consistent framework that guides the quality of feedback from the administrative team. In addition, feedback sometimes lacks specificity and clear next steps for improvement. A review of the written observations and teacher feedback indicates that there is not a consistent

alignment with the school's stated goals. For example, differentiation is a critical goal noted in the school's planning documents. However, the feedback given to teachers does not always align to this goal. As a result, teachers do not always benefit from strategic feedback that improves teaching and learning in the school at this time.

<b>School name: Dr. Roland N. Patterson School / IS 229</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?			X	
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**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, 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?			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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		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