



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Parkside Preparatory Academy

Middle School 2

**655 Parkside Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11226**

Principal: Adrienne Spencer

Dates of review: October 11 - 12, 2006

Reviewer: Andy McClean

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Parkside Preparatory Academy is located in the Flatbush area of South Brooklyn. The school covers grades 6 through 8. The school has reduced in size from nearly 1200 students to the current number enrolled of 620 in the last four years.

Ninety percent of students are Black with 7% Hispanic. The majority of new immigrants come from the Caribbean. Around 5% of students are English language learners. Approximately 9% are special education students. Attendance is in line with the average for all City schools and above that of similar schools.

The school has a very well maintained building. The students have been allocated to three houses or mini schools to ensure that they are well known by staff and have access to teachers who know them very well. The school has had eleven principals in the last seven years, with the present principal appointed four years ago.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides vision, determined leadership, challenge and support to teachers and students.
- An outstanding team spirit and very positive school culture is evident in all aspects of school life, and this is exemplified in the role models provided by the principal and school leaders.
- The whole school environment is safe, secure and colorful, encouraging students to feel pride in their school.
- The school aims to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of students in preparing them for life.
- Excellent early identification of special education students leads to effective individual education plans.
- Gifts and talents of all students are regularly identified and celebrated.
- A calm and purposeful learning environment prevails and this is achieved by the insistence of a strict code of behavior.
- Teachers welcome innovative practice and learn from each other.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the use of structured reading programs that enable less able students to interpret text and information more readily.
- Ensure that the needs of students of all abilities are met in classes by differentiating instruction .
- Improve students' use of technology to support investigational learning across the curriculum

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

The school has emerged from a challenging period in its history. It has had eleven principals in seven years and many changes of staff. The present principal, in her four years in office, has changed the whole direction and culture of the school. She is ably supported by an administration that shares her desire to encourage all students to succeed. The teachers and support staff show a team spirit and openness to learn from each other and this has resulted in significant increases in progress by all students. This is particularly evident in the case of special education students and English language learners. As a result of early identification and intervention, these students make good gains in relation to their targets.

Students enjoy their school life and have many opportunities to succeed both academically and socially. The school emphasizes the need for close cooperation between teachers and parents and staff make great efforts to reach out into the community to contact parents who find it difficult to support the children's education. The determined leadership of a dedicated principal, very well supported by her team, has been the crucial factor in recent successes.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school regularly analyzes data from a wide variety of sources, such as State and City tests, their own tests in the main subjects and teachers' own grading. It uses this information to build a picture of how well the school is doing year-on-year. It also uses the information from the results to look at the performance of the various groups of students represented in the school. This allows them to see where resources and support need to be targeted. Detailed examination of data on students as they enter the school in 6th grade provides the basis on which they are placed in one of three "mini-schools" This reflects the principal's aims to provide courses of instruction and differentiated work best suited to their attainment levels.

A key feature of the use of data is the provision of feedback to groups and individual students. The feedback is based upon teachers' grading of students' work against rubrics, providing detailed written comments and suggestions as to how students can improve. Such communication happens not only on the required quarterly cycle but also within a shorter timescale, and means that teachers can identify the next steps for students in a timely manner.

The early identification of students needing additional support is a strength of the school. From the analysis of data provided from the students' previous schools, those deemed to be at risk of underachievement are identified, their parents are consulted, individual education plans are generated and all teachers are informed about the support the students will receive. The progress made by special education students is regularly tested and reviewed, with any necessary modifications made.

Similarly, the school uses data very effectively to identify and support students as English language learners. It implements a program that diagnoses their strengths and weaknesses in reading in a very detailed way to ensure progress against their specific needs. The principal and academic intervention service staff use significant budget resources to address students' low reading standards, a major challenge for large numbers of students.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

Long term goals are outlined in detail in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan. This has been formulated by the school leadership team in a very consultative manner. It is a strong feature of the leadership of the principal that such goals and plans for the school are the result of teamwork and regular consultation. The major areas identified for improvement currently are English language arts and mathematics, based on the school's analysis of students' performance data. In consultation with those responsible for these areas, the school administration regularly checks progress through data analysis and the scrutiny of the work of certain targeted students. If insufficient progress is made, modifications to programs of instruction are introduced, teachers are informed of these deficiencies and students are counseled and supported to help them improve their grades.

Data is well used to plan goals for individual and groups of students. Great emphasis is placed upon the early identification of students at risk. Teachers with responsibility for these students collaborate with their colleagues, parents and the students in establishing support networks and programs. Across the school, students of all abilities are set challenging targets; they are regularly informed of their progress and support is given to them and their parents to ensure homework is completed to the required standard. All of this fulfils the principal's vision of realizing the full potential of all students based upon a solid foundation of data.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school has made improving the core curriculum its major focus with the teaching of English language arts and mathematics given significant additional time and resources. Initiatives to promote investigations in science designed to improve students' thinking skills

have resulted in some very good results. Meetings are held regularly for different grades to plan together and discuss specific instructional programs. At these meetings and those with senior staff, there is regular reference to the test results and other data that generated by internal assessment, to determine how instruction should be planned. Teachers show great teamwork in their collaborative planning, as faculties and within grades and support each other effectively.

Instruction engages students and involves them in their learning. The teachers seek to provide students with a curriculum that is both challenging and relevant to their lives. For example, in a very lively debate about slavery and the Underground Railroad in an 8th grade social studies class, students of all abilities were able to participate and their opinions were respected. At present, the use of information technology to support learning across content areas is under-developed.

The school is analytical about its own performance and aware of areas that need development. For example, school leaders are aware of the need to provide greater differentiation in planning and teaching to ensure that all abilities are sufficiently challenged. Additional finance and extra staff have been allocated to support the curriculum areas identified for development in the current Comprehensive Education Plan. Support from the district, local universities and colleges, as well as other schools have also been used.

Teachers plan programs of support and have regular contact with special education students to discuss their progress and how they are meeting their targets in individual education plans. The school has invested both time and money in specific diagnostic reading programs that support students who are at risk of reading failure. The outcomes from the program are regularly assessed to see what progress students make and whether such support needs adjustment. At present, the data shows that programs to support lower ability students in their reading need further work to help students to use reading effectively across content areas, and the school has plans to address this.

Parents and students are very supportive of the school. Indeed, through the senior leadership team, parents have a direct input into planning through the Comprehensive Education Plan and have the opportunity to hold the school to account for its results. The quality of instruction in school is outstanding and the students enjoy their classes.

Attendance is good overall and is higher than similar schools. This results from initiatives introduced by the principal such as the swipe card system of registration. This generates data which is effectively used to check on absence and patterns of long term absence by particular students.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

In her time at the school, the principal has created a markedly improved school culture. The school is calm and purposeful. There is now an expectation that all students receive the best possible education in an environment that is safe and secure but also very challenging. Teachers are appointed on the basis of their strong subject knowledge, high expectations and good interpersonal skills.

Professional development focuses on enabling teachers to obtain and use data to improve students' achievement. At present, this development concentrates on the need to improve students' English language arts skills with a particular emphasis on reading. Regular lunchtime sessions are held by coaches and senior staff to improve teachers' understanding of best practice and to identify those areas that need improvement. Senior staff regularly observe and are present in classrooms and this ensures that all teachers feel that they are part of a highly developed teaching team. Teachers have regular dialogues with their peers to seek help or guidance with specific problems or students. For example, in a voluntary lunchtime session, the most recent and inexperienced member of staff suggested a particularly successful method of teaching a mathematics concept. The session was observed with respect and interest by more experienced colleagues who accepted that it was a valid strategy.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

Planning is of a high standard. The principal ensures that all teachers and parents, as well as any other parties with an interest in the school, have the opportunity to have their voices heard. A very experienced mentor is employed to assist her and provide objective feedback on the school's progress. This is effective practice. The Comprehensive Education Plan is very detailed and shows that the school is effectively aligning the curriculum to improve students' standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence from English language arts results and school data show that students' speaking and listening skills have improved. Students talk confidently and fluently, they respect each other's views and can formulate arguments successfully. The implementation of specific reading programs to support less able students has begun to have an impact. Teachers are aware of the need to develop such programs further in order to develop students' understanding through reading materials.

From detailed scrutiny of data, students in need of particular assistance, both in class and when withdrawn for extra support, make very good progress. Regular testing is used to inform students of progress towards their goals and this information is also passed on to parents.

The school's implementation of a computerized system to monitor registration and attendance is highly effective. Not only do students feel proud of having their own identity cards, the system provides the school with immediate data to track and target those in danger of failure through non-attendance or repeated lateness.

The school is aware of the need to develop its evaluation of actions carried out to raise achievement. At present, measures of student progress are largely in terms of numerical gains in mandated tests. However, in keeping with the school's aim of developing the whole child, the principal and cabinet plan to evaluate other areas of student progress, such as their attendance, self-esteem and participation in social and extra-curricular activities in relation to the academic gains that result.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Parkside Preparatory Academy [MS 002]	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			X
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	Ø	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	Ø	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	Ø	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X