



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Ryder School

Public School 114

**1077 Remsen Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: María Peñaherrera

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Reviewer: Lysbeth Bradley

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Ryder School is a neighborhood elementary school that serves nearly 1000 students from pre-kindergarten through to grade 5. Most students live nearby but those in the Astral program for gifted students travel from all parts of the City. The school is Title 1 eligible.

The school population has close to 90% Black students, with the remainder mainly Hispanic and a small number of White and Asian students. Newly arrived students come mainly from the Caribbean and more recently from the Yemen. The proportion of English language learners (6.3%) is smaller than other schools but is growing year-on-year. The first language of most of these students is Spanish and Haitian Creole. The school has an average number of special education students.

The school has an increasingly transient population of students who enter and leave the school in all grades and throughout the year. This affects the achievement and attendance of a small but significant minority of students. In spite of this, the school works hard to promote good attendance and attendance rates currently stand at 94%, which is higher than that of many other schools. The number of suspensions has reduced by 50% since the principal was appointed in 2004 and students report that the school is now a safer and better place to learn.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the school, provides energetic and sensitive leadership and is a very good role model for staff, parents and students.
- There is thoughtful appointment and deployment of staff to meet the school's goals.
- The principal is adept at building the capacity of her staff at every stage of their career.
- The staff create a calm learning environment in which students are keen to learn and work well with their fellow students.
- The school is effective in identifying and meeting the needs of its English language learners and enabling them to succeed.
- There are very good levels of collaboration between members of staff for the benefit of both students and teachers.
- The school is successful in breaking down the barriers to learning for its most needy students.
- The school gives students and parents a voice in the way it is run and their ideas are valued and acted upon.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that members of staff, at all levels, use data effectively to improve the organization of the curriculum and to differentiate learning for the students in their classes.
- Inject greater rigor into setting whole-school goals by identifying short-term targets.
- Find manageable ways of involving staff in whole-school planning and in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's work on student achievement.
- Use data effectively to map out individualized learning programs for those students in danger of falling behind and closely monitor and evaluate which interventions work best.
- Build on the good work in sharing the best instructional practices to focus on learning outcomes in raising achievement.
- Optimize the use of the school's technology resources to promote learning across the curriculum and to support staff in planning, assessing and handling data.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with significant strengths in professional development.

When the principal was appointed two years ago she quickly and accurately identified the strengths of the school and pinpointed what needed to be done to raise the achievement of its students. The school is focused on building character alongside the need to raise academic performance. A calm learning environment has been established and a team of support staff is on hand for needy students and parents enabling them to quickly get the right help.

In two years the principal has been successful in changing the culture of the school to one where all partners in students' learning are enabled to play a full part. She expanded the administration to include the literacy and mathematics coaches and other staff developers. This year she has formed an instructional team, which also includes key members of the teaching staff, who have the capacity to influence their colleagues. She has brought together veteran teachers and those new to the profession, enabling them to work collaboratively and to gain from what each brings in terms of experience and new ideas. These changes have already improved student achievement and the school has received official recognition for closing the gap with other schools.

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 proficient.

The school regularly checks on students' performance to make sure that they are making an acceptable rate of progress and puts in place programs to support those students who are in danger of falling behind. Grow Reports enable staff to identify where there are common weaknesses in individual classes and grades and to adjust curriculum and lesson planning. The school has been successful in increasing the number of students meeting or exceeding the learning standards and decreasing the number who fall short. In the last two years, test results indicate that the school is closing the gap with similar schools in a sustained manner. The school has not begun to use data well to understand why different ethnic groups or boys and girls do better in certain subjects, or to use this information to consider the most appropriate teaching and learning styles for particular groups.

The school has a good understanding of the best ways to assess the needs of their English language learners and makes effective use of all available information to provide the right level of support. This ensures that students are placed in classes where they will learn best. There is a good level of differentiated support to take account of the varying levels of proficiency in English and students' range of abilities in other subjects. Those students who arrive with little or no English make rapid progress as a result of well-targeted instruction in small groups. In classroom settings they are paired with another student who speaks their home language but who is also proficient in English so that they

can participate through an intermediary. This approach builds confidence and competence and in a number of documented cases promotes rapid and sustained progress.

Although members of the academic intervention services team work hard to support individual students and record their progress in each subject, they have not developed systems to monitor the range of interventions provided for individual students, or to assess the extent to which these accelerate students' progress. Insufficient use is made of the range of available data to design an individualized program for each student that is based on an accurate diagnostic assessment of their weaknesses.

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 proficient.

The principal has developed good systems, involving senior staff, to monitor the quality of instructional practice in order to provide closely targeted support for staff new to the profession and the building. Creating collaborative relationships has been central to this process and is enabling all staff to reflect on their own practice and to be receptive to the exchange of ideas. Analysis of the data led the principal to identify a partnership with the Teachers' College as the key to driving instructional practice in the school's approach to reading and writing. Teachers are enthused by their involvement and very keen to share what they learn with their colleagues. Veteran teachers affirm that they have been energized by Teachers' College and welcome insights into new methodologies and ways of thinking. There is an infectious buzz in the school that augurs well for the future.

The school has made significant strides forward in achieving a good degree of consistency in instructional practice, classroom organization and management. Progress has been accelerated by thoughtfully grouping the teachers to promote purposeful collaboration and also by their willingness to learn from each other.

Teachers do not yet have access to all of the available data. Nor do they have sufficient understanding of the implications of the data for their planning and practice, or how this can impact on their students' learning. Most teachers are now at the stage where they can begin to link the effects of instruction on students' learning. They are also able to question the effectiveness of the strategies they use in order to accelerate the progress of individuals and groups in their class.

The parent coordinator has worked hard to establish good two-way communication with parents and to provide them with the knowledge and resources to support their children's learning. Parents understand what the school stands for and how they can work with the school in their children's best interests.

Quality Statement 3 – Build and Align Capacity: 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 proficient.

The school has been successful in expanding and targeting its resources to support curriculum initiatives. Teachers are well supported in adopting new methodologies with relevant materials, technology and human resources. The principal has not only recognized the strengths of individual members of staff, but has given considerable thought to how best to deploy them in order to realize the potential that she has identified within each one of them. Many staff during the review welcomed the opportunity they had been given to expand their horizons and explained how taking on a fresh responsibility had widened their insights into students' learning.

The principal has also encouraged staff to introduce flexibility into their weekly schedule in order to provide a variety of activities. By doing this they are maximizing students' engagement and enjoyment. The school has also gone some way in encouraging teachers to adopt the workshop model to encourage collaboration and accountable talk. Teachers regularly make informal assessments of how well the students in their classes are learning and as a result they have a reasonably accurate picture. However, the teachers do not take sufficient account of all the available data to adjust the organization of the curriculum within each lesson. Consequently they are not differentiating the level of challenge they provide for students of differing abilities. As a result, some students make good progress, but others mark time or are left struggling to understand what has been taught.

The school has a sensible long-term plan for the development of technology resources to support the work of students, teachers and parents within the school community. There is a satisfactory level of equipment and technology resources within the school to implement this plan. Much effort has been put into establishing a good level of consistency in the confidence and competence of teachers in terms of classroom management and organization. However, there is not the same level of consistency in relation to staff expertise in using technology to promote learning across the curriculum or to use it as a management tool for planning, assessing and handling data.

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.

The principal considers the professional development of her staff to be one of her key responsibilities. She has set up effective structures and procedures to make sure that the school's professional development program is closely aligned to the school's goals, so that the needs of individual teachers are swiftly identified and that the impact of training activities is linked to students' progress.

In order to promote greater consistency in classroom organization and instructional practice and to ensure that all teachers have similarly high expectations, the school involves teachers in learning walks to help them to understand what best practice looks like. Common preparation periods are built into the schedule so that teachers from the same grade can meet to evaluate the effectiveness of learning programs. This helps them

to assess whether they are motivating students, and where they are not providing good levels of challenge so that students can improve their scores.

The principal's ambition is for every member of staff to become a resource for learning for their colleagues. She and her instructional team have been successful in breaking down barriers so that teachers welcome other teachers into their classrooms. They are receptive to constructive feedback, which enables them to improve their practice, however experienced they are. Teachers speak of feeling energized by having contact with new teachers, and those new to the school and the profession speak highly of the quality of support they received from fellow teachers who were both knowledgeable and approachable. The bottom line in all their discussions is always, "What do we have to do to enable these students to realize their potential and make sustained progress from year to year?"

The principal rightly believes that encouraging her staff to be courageous and to take on new responsibilities will give them confidence to encourage their students to do the same and explore the extent of their potential.

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 proficient.

From the start, the principal has successfully sought ways to give staff and parents a voice in the school's development. The work of the school leadership team is correctly focused on improving students' achievement and in encouraging maximum parental involvement in support of this central aim. Working sub-committees have been established to encourage a wider constituency to have ownership of the Comprehensive Education Plan. By encouraging those involved to revise each section to reflect the school's position honestly, the principal has helped those involved to understand that the plan is not just a document, but represents a thinking process in which everybody needs involvement.

The school has correctly identified and clearly stated its key priorities for improvement. However, it has not established specific short-term goals that will enable the administration and the instructional team to become more involved in making regular checks on the progress towards these goals. Nor is it yet evaluating the impact of teaching and the curriculum on students' progress. The school recognizes that until very recently classroom teachers have not been part of the planning, monitoring and evaluation process. It is now putting steps in place to help them understand the explicit link between the work they do in the classroom and the school's goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Ryder School (PS 114)	∅	✓	+
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	