



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Public School 197

The John B Russwurm School

**2230 5th Avenue
New York
NY 10037**

Principal: Renardo Wright

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Reviewer: Kathleen Yates

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The John B Russwurm School is an elementary school which serves an ethnically diverse population in New York City. It caters for 577 students from pre kindergarten to grade 6. The section of Harlem from which the student population comes is culturally diverse. The greatest proportion of pupils, 75% comes from Black families. In addition 22% of students are Hispanic, 1% is Asian, and 1% is White. Approximately 1% of students are from American Indian or Alaskan families. Three percent of students are English language learners. The proportion of students who have special educational need is 12%. The proportion of students known to be Title 1 eligible is 67%.

Attendance is slightly below the average for similar schools and below average when compared with schools throughout the City.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal leads the school very effectively and is held in high esteem by staff, students and parents.
- Every student works very hard to achieve the school's aim of 'Yes I can'.
- The open and orderly school climate encourages students to want to do well, to respect each other and to behave well.
- Teaching is of a consistently high quality and students respond well to the high expectations that are set.
- Data on students' performance is analyzed well so that teachers have a clear understanding of what it is students need to do to improve.
- Enrichment activities provide students with good opportunities to develop self-to-life connections.
- Well established teamwork and a close collaboration between all staff means that everyone contributes to the decision making process.
- The school is especially effective in meeting the social, emotional and academic needs of those children who have the greatest barriers to learning.
- There are close connection with outside organizations enriches the lives of the students and all the participants.
- The school recognizes its challenges and is eager to address them.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide teachers with better opportunities to be involved in self and peer evaluation;
- Improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of technology so that they can make better use of the available equipment across the school;
- Continue to improve levels of attendance.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

The principal, who has been in post for 4 years is inspirational and has excellent communication skills. He provides excellent leadership and management for the school. During his time at the school it has come a long way and its success is due to the united efforts of all the staff who believe that 'all children are reachable, teachable and entitled to a quality education'. Every student truly matters to all the staff who have expended great effort to create a calm and orderly culture and to make the school a warm haven in which to work and learn. As a result students are achieving well in both their personal and academic development in a very positive learning environment where classrooms are exciting places and learning is fun. Parents and the local community are encouraged at every opportunity to be partners in all aspects of the students' learning. There is a strong sense of mutual respect, with all associated with the school showing great pride in it.

The analysis of data underpins all aspects of the school's work. Improvements in outcomes are celebrated and the progress shown is used to set challenging targets for the future for both individuals and the whole school. High quality instruction engages the students, enabling them to progress well. Teachers use data well to both group students and inform their instructional programs. As a result, all students, including those with special needs and English language learners, are well supported.

The wide variety within the curriculum is much valued by the students who enjoy, for example, success in their basketball competitions. The well focused professional development program has been effective in improving instruction.

The principal and his team have made some innovative changes to the school's structure as a result of careful analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. Single gender classes for the oldest students, for example, have led to better outcomes. Current priorities are being tackled with rigor.

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 collects and makes very good use of a wide range of data about the attainment and progress that students make. Data is constantly updated and accurately shows both the performance and the progress of each student, each classroom and each grade level. All staff in the school are using the data effectively to note the performance and progress of different groups of pupils. Data for the special education students is being used well to point the way to very suitable academic intervention strategies. The strong team of support personnel effectively target all students identified as being at risk. Highly focused small

group sessions are helping these students to make good progress. However, similar programs now need to be developed to fully challenge the most able students. .

Teachers assess students' work regularly and efficiently and this information is shared widely. The data collected is analyzed by the principal, coaches and leaders to determine the progress made by different groups of students across all grades in the school. Evidence to support these assessments is found in portfolios of students' work. The principal and all the staff have worked hard to improve students' progress. They compare results thoroughly with the school's own past performance, with similar schools, among all grade levels and for all students. The school is working to be even more adept in comparing students' progress with that of other schools and in systematically tracking progress between and across grade boundaries.

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.

The school supports students' progress and achievement well. Staff collaboration is impressive.. There are frequent and regular review meetings, grade conferences and faculty conferences. Teams meet according to students' needs and share data about students' progress. Long term plans are developed in the Comprehensive Education Plan, which drives the activity of the whole school community. More immediate plans, for individual students, are developed by the academic instruction services team. In between, faculty, grade and class teams set goals and develop effective plans which are regularly evaluated and revised to meet students' needs.

The principal and school leaders have developed useful systems that focus on the various needs of individual students, specific groups and grade levels. Systems are well developed to deal with students who are not making progress that would be expected at their grade level. These students are quickly identified, their needs are carefully diagnosed and additional support programs are provided which effectively deal with their individual needs.

All staff have high expectations of students which are communicated well to parents and students. Parents have regular and frequent information about their children's progress and their learning steps. In addition to parent conferences twice a year, the school sends an annual written report about each student's progress to their parents. Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school, or individual teachers, to discuss the progress made by their children. They are very appreciative of the school's open door policy and make good use of it to support their children. Regular workshops are held to explain and demonstrate how parents can help their children reach their goals. These are greatly appreciated by parents and are having a positive impact on standards of achievement.

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's curriculum, which is closely aligned with the requirements of the State and the City is broad and balanced and provides an interesting range of learning opportunities to the students. There is a firm emphasis on high expectations and the work of students is reviewed regularly to ensure that they are making sufficient progress. Patterns of student achievement are carefully analyzed and the findings are used to inform decision making. As a result of this analysis, for example, the school now acknowledges the need to improve the computer skills of the students so that they can further improve their work.. Because lessons are made interesting the students are generally highly motivated and most enjoy coming to school and attend regularly.

Decisions regarding the school's budget, staffing and scheduling are taken very carefully to support the needs of the curriculum and the improvements that are identified as a result of the careful analysis of data. Teachers readily describe their accountability for students' learning and the good range of information they use used to inform their work in class. Information about students' progress is used well in determining selection of resources.. The curricula for reading, writing mathematics and science are well developed and ensure students are developing life skills for reading for meaning and for problem solving. The school makes good use of teachers' expertise in the delivery of instruction.

Teaching is good and promotes learning very successfully, resulting in improving results in tests. The majority of lessons are carefully planned, challenging and interesting. Learning intentions are shared with students so that they know what they are working on and what they must do to succeed. Good teaching is maintained by a culture of high expectations, regular discussion and rigorous classroom observation.

Relationships between all students & teachers are exceptionally well modeled by the principal and all staff and are reflected in the range of interactions between students and adults. Behavior is good and any incidences of poor behavior are fairly but firmly managed. Together with the school's successful implementation of strategies to improve attendance, this promotes a very positive attitude to learning. Teachers know their students well, including those who experience difficulties in their learning, so they identify difficulties and address them at an early stage. Enrichment opportunities are much appreciated by staff and parents and the students have been very successful in basketball which also enhances their teambuilding skills.

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 has very clear criteria and procedures for selecting staff and for dealing with any underperformance that is identified by the rigorous procedures that are in place. He recognizes the need for effective teamwork and makes careful choices when assigning staff to a grade or a student. This has a positive impact both on the quality of instruction and relationships across the school.

Professional development is firmly based on the continuous drive to improve student engagement, achievement and staff instruction. Programs support both newly appointed and experienced staff to meet personal and school needs. Discussion and debate in teams is an important part of professional development and provides a forum for planning interventions and revising decisions in response to new information. Teachers regularly share their planning and discuss and analyze students' work. The principal regularly observes teaching and gives feedback. However, teachers do not all have sufficient opportunities for peer observations or self evaluation to improve their practice. The impact of professional development is closely evaluated by the principal and assistant principals using data from their monitoring of students' and teachers' performance.

The school is aware of its challenges and the principal constantly strives to improve performance. For example, the school is experimenting this year in the introduction of separate classes for boys and girls in grade 6. There are signs that this has already had a positive impact on accelerated learning.

The school is a very calm and orderly place, extremely well run and well maintained. Procedures are clear, and followed well by staff, parents, students and the community; all take a pride in their school. The principal and other school leaders are highly respected, and model not only high expectations but also care and commitment to students and their families. There are productive partnerships with a range of outside bodies such as Harlem Hospital and Harlem Children's Zone, and the school makes very effective use of community-based services, such as the Carmel Hill Fund for the after school program to assist those students and families needing additional support.

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

The principal has an excellent understanding of what is happening in each classroom in each grade for each student. The Comprehensive Education Plan provides a good framework for the school to evaluate its work through the year. To ensure this happens, there are regular meetings of teams across the school, including the school cabinet, the professional development team, coaches, the academic intervention services, the parent partnership committee and the school leadership team. The regular meetings are driven by the determination to see all students achieve as well as they can. Discussions about students' assessments enable teachers to compare, evaluate and monitor the relative progress of students across classrooms and between grades. Administrators use all school data to check on student achievement and to amend the curricula as appropriate. As a result of weaknesses identified, teaching practices are rigorously reviewed; teachers evaluate their plans. Specific interventions such as professional development are implemented to improve expertise. Plans are adapted and practices altered in order to meet goals for accelerated learning. This process is a continuous cycle which ensures interim and final goals are modified when data demonstrates that revision is required. These processes ensure that all progress towards the school goals have agreed milestones and evaluative strategies. The current emphasis is on refining its tracking procedures to monitor the progress students make.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: John B. Russwurm School (PS197)	∅	✓	+
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