



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Ruby S Couche Elementary School

Public School 30

**126 – 10 Bedell Street
Queens
NY 11434**

Principal: Althea Tyson

Dates of review: November 27 – 28, 2006

Reviewer: Leo Connolly

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The school is located in the South Jamaica area of Queens. There are approximately 557 students enrolled from pre kindergarten to grade 5. There are 110 special education students and 16 English language learners. Approximately 85% of the students are African American with the remainder coming from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding and is classed as a school in 'good standing'. The number of students with Title 1 eligibility is below similar schools but above the City average. The school has a larger than average number of transient students which has an impact on the scores gained in City and State assessments.

The school is in receipt of a number of grants that serve to enhance the education for students. Achievement is generally above similar schools in both English language arts and mathematics in both City and State tests at grade four. The absence rate is below the average for the city and for similar schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The effective leadership of the principal provides vision, focus, rigor and drive to the work of the school.
- The school has well developed systems and structures to support the students with the greatest needs.
- The school provides structured opportunities for teachers within a grade to meet, plan and evaluate.
- The principal is particularly adept at attracting grants and funding that enables the school to enhance the education of the students.
- The school provides a secure learning environment.
- Classrooms that are bright, stimulating and vibrant environments that engage students.
- The school showcases the work of students effectively through attractive bulletin boards and hallway displays.
- The staff support for each other at all levels, enhancing collaborative planning and the subsequent evaluation of student's progress.
- The school provides a wide range of professional development opportunities that are geared to the needs of the school, the students and individual teachers.
- The before and after school program that is aligned well to the school curricula and is effective in meeting student's needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the analysis of data to identify and track trends in performance for cohorts and groups of students.
- Collate all of the available data into a simplified student tracking system thus making it more manageable and accessible.
- Continue to use and share the data gathered from diagnostic testing in English language arts and mathematics to ensure that common weaknesses in students learning and understanding are identified and addressed.
- Further develop the capacity of the teachers to analyze and use data to provide focused plans that meet the needs of their students.
- Use the action plans that support the school goals as the basis for an easily accessible and focused document that ensures progress towards school goals are kept 'on track', through a process of setting interim goals or milestones and monitoring and reviewing.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

This is an inclusive school that welcomes all students regardless of their individual needs. Many students are bussed from outside of the school's zone. It has high expectations of its students and provides an atmosphere of calm and care for many of the students who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. Teamwork and support for staff is a strong feature of the school.

The principal is effective in that she provides a clear vision, focus, rigor and drive to the work of the school. Her enthusiasm and knowledge of her students as individuals is recognized by all constituencies as a key feature of her leadership. She is seen as being approachable and very supportive. Staff trust her judgment and she is making a positive difference.

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 overall, with some undeveloped features.

The school supplements data supplied by the City and State with a wide variety of assessments such as the Developmental Reading Assessment, The Princeton Review, Dynamic Indicators of Early Basic Literacy Skills and Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System in addition to running records, rubrics and checklists, conference notes and interim assessments. The school mathematics program has its own built in assessments and teachers are also assessing students in reading and writing on a regular basis through grade conferencing. As these assessments are school based there is a swift response to issues identified by the assessments. Teachers are able to adapt and modify the curricula for individual students and groups of students and ensure that there is appropriate differentiation within the classroom. Although the school uses and understands the data it collects effectively there is a need to collate the data into a simplified student tracking system that makes it more manageable and accessible.

The principal and her team carefully monitor student's overall performance and this data is used to ensure that students are making appropriate progress both within classrooms and within the grade. Although the school has a larger percentage of special education students than similar schools it still outperforms those schools in English language arts achievement and mathematics achievement at all levels.

To date not enough has been done to analyze the performance of students from different groups within the school and as a result may be missing certain trends in student performance.

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.

Data is analyzed and used by teachers to reflect on what has been learned and to plan the next steps for students. The use of individual student conferences contributes to the setting of goals so that students are clear about what their next steps are. Although the focus of assessment is the individual student, the school has developed collaborative approaches to assessment through the grade conferences. The data is analyzed and teachers plan their lessons accordingly, identifying learning groups and adapting content and presentation to meet the needs of the students. The conferences provide an opportunity for grade teachers to share teaching strategies and to look at alternative methods of presentation to maximize student achievement. These procedures to measure all students’ progress ensure that previous learning is built on effectively. Data is available through the coaches at these meetings particularly from diagnostic testing in English language arts and mathematics and this is used to ensure that common weaknesses in students learning and understanding are identified and addressed.

The vertical grade conferences introduced in early November are an effective way of ensuring better progression and continuity. The grade conferences are used not only to share what teachers are doing but also to focus on the goals for the school, for example, narrowing reading levels for differentiated instruction.

The school has well developed and effective systems to support all students including special education students and those of risk of failure. The procedures are made explicit to the teachers and there is an expectation of in-class intervention for six to eight weeks prior to formal referral. Provision relates to increasing levels of interventions ranging from classroom provision to Academic Intervention Services to a restrictive environment.

The school communicates clearly with parents and involves them whenever possible in their child’s education. Parents are very supportive of the school and its staff and in particular, the principal. There are kept informed of what is happening in school and of any issues relating to their child. There is a group of committed parents who are closely involved with the school. Despite the school’s best efforts the involvement of the wider parent body is still limited.

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 proficient.

The curriculum is aligned to State and City standards with a clear focus on English language arts and mathematics supported by curriculum maps and accompanying rubrics. The school also makes use of assessment tools such as the Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. These not only give feedback on the effectiveness of intervention support, but also provide quality assessment information which helps the school and its teachers in its development of an appropriate instructional program for a student or group of students. In addition, the curriculum is enhanced by the availability of a Visual and Performing Arts cluster teacher

who helps to bring breadth to the curriculum through her involvement in school performances and productions. A Project Arts grant has enabled the school to provide violin and recorder tuition in the past and it is intended that it should be used for ballroom dancing later in the year.

Since most lessons are presented in an interesting way the students are responsive, well motivated, enjoy their learning and develop positive attitudes. The school has made good progress on City and State tests and is now performing above similar schools despite having a significantly higher percentage of special education students. The school has six self contained special education classes and, in addition, has established three collaborative team teaching classes which are successfully meeting the challenges of the differing needs within these classes. This is a testament to the inclusive nature of the school.

The welcoming, safe and secure learning environment encourages students to attend school regularly, to want to learn, to respect and care for each other and to behave well. There are effective procedures to monitor absences and to encourage good attendance.

The common preparation time established by the school is seen by staff as a very valuable support for collaboration and professional development, time to analyze and share data, an opportunity to discuss the effectiveness of their teaching, to reflect and refocus and an opportunity to plan and prepare. The coaches are effectively deployed to support these meetings every week and the principal also uses this time to meet on a monthly basis with grade teachers to analyze data, and to monitor and review student progress. The principal, who holds staff closely to account for the progress students make in their classes, is particularly adept at attracting grants and funding that enables the school to enhance its programs for students. This money has been used, for example, to provide laptops for all students in grades three, four and five. Budgeting decisions are driven by needs revealed by the student data, for example, the appointment of two reading teachers and one mathematics teacher to support the 'push-in, pull-out' program.

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 proficient.

The principal makes her expectations very clear to all potential new appointments and selection is made on the basis of the candidate demonstrating a range of teaching strategies, a capacity to learn, eagerness, flexibility, high expectations and positive attitudes towards students. When appointed, new teachers find that staff support for each other at all levels enhances collaborative planning and encourages shared evaluations of student progress.

The school provides a wide range of professional development opportunities that are geared to the needs of the school, the students and the individual teacher. The most effective learning is in-house particularly within the common preparation time where discussions are focused on how well individuals and groups of students are progressing. These meetings are supported by the coaches who have a key role in working with staff on data driven instruction. It allows them to further develop the capacity of the teachers to analyze and use data to provide focused plans that meet the needs of their students.

The school values the contributions of all of its students. Their work is showcased on the bulletin boards and there are colorful displays of students' work in the cafeteria and on the walls in the hallways. The classroom environments give those who work in them and those who visit clear messages about what is held to be important. They are bright, stimulating and vibrant environments that engage students and help to make them more receptive. They are in the main, well thought out learning spaces.

The principal and vice principals have a high profile around the school regularly visiting classes. Formal classroom observations are scheduled and supplemented with informal visits on a regular basis. Because the principal and the assistant principals are frequently in and out of classrooms, talking with students, looking at their work and scrutinizing the classroom environment, the principal has very good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development of her staff.

Inter class visitations are arranged on a needs basis and may form part of a support strategy for a particular teacher. The school runs smoothly and students feel safe and well cared for. The before school and after school program is aligned to the school curricula and is effective in meeting student's needs.

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.

Priorities for the Comprehensive Education Plan were arrived at through a collaborative exercise involving the school leadership team. However this is not a working document in that there are no interim goals or milestones that would provide the school with stepping stones towards its stated goals. It does not provide an ongoing point of reference for the school's work. The action plans supporting the achievement of the goals are not reviewed or revised on a regular basis and therefore there are no formal means of keeping the school 'on track' in meeting its stated goals.

Assessments of students' progress are taking place on a regular basis through a variety of means and they are discussed in a variety of forums. Plans are revised, amended and in some cases goals may even change. Students who are in receipt of intervention strategies have clear plans with frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress. The use of data informs the decision making in the school particularly with regard to realigning the curriculum in response to identified student needs. The 'push-in' and 'pull-out' strategies and the before and after school program are good examples of this and are geared towards ensuring good progress for students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Ruby S Couche Elementary School (PS030)	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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	