



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Rockwood Park School

Public School / Middle School 207

**159 - 15 88th Street
Queens
NY 11414**

Principal: Linda Spadaro

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Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

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 Rockwood Park School serves 740 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 8. Twenty percent are special needs students and 1% are English language learners, for whom the predominant home language is Spanish. Seventy-seven percent of students are White. Thirteen percent are Hispanic, 5% are Asian and 3% are Black. The school is not Title 1 eligible. Attendance averages above 93%, higher than the City average.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school provides a warm, welcoming, safe environment for learning.
- School leadership is inclusive, collaborative and team-based.
- Teachers are expected to improve their instruction and student outcomes.
- Teachers are well supported by coaches, administrators, workshops and study groups as they endeavor to implement the mandated curriculum.
- The school enjoys strong support from and involvement with its parent community.
- The school has communicated firm and fair expectations for adherence to school policies to parents and students.
- The school is orderly and functions smoothly on a day-to-day basis.
- The school celebrates student achievement through displays, awards and ceremonies.
- Students are well known and cared for by their teachers, guidance personnel, and school administrators.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to increase teachers' access to, and analysis of, the available student data to diagnose students' individual learning needs.
- Identify tools to diagnose students' learning styles and interests to support the expansion of the enrichment program.
- Continue to provide professional development and coaching in techniques for the differentiation of instruction.
- Increase visitations to schools that have successfully instituted the mandated curriculum and where differentiation of instruction is routine.
- Refine planning practices to include measurable short-term goals and measures of success towards meeting established targets.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The steady leadership of the current principal, who is completing her third year at the school, has provided an already strong educational institution with direction for improvement in curriculum and instruction. The use of data has increased and instruction is increasingly aligned with regional and City mandates. Plans tend to address more long term goals rather than interim targets. Teachers and administrators share in the decision-making and governance of the school and students benefit from clearly defined expectations for their behavior and their learning. The school enjoys the solid support of its neighboring community and recognizes the effectiveness of the principal in bringing about improvements.

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 analysis of student achievement data is increasing in the school. Administrators and cabinet members review results from State tests, regional practice tests and, to a lesser degree, the Princeton Review, in order to group students for instruction in classrooms or instructional programs. Teachers, increasingly, rely on their observations of students' learning gathered in conference notes and running records. Their increased access to and analysis of standardized test data would benefit their broadened understanding of students' needs. Instructional software, used to supplement instruction for some students in English language arts at the lower grades, provides data relative to students' learning needs. Regent's results inform planning at the upper grades.

The school does monitor the progress of its special needs students and its English language learners through assessments specific to their instructional programs. Test results inform program changes and instructional interventions. The school is aware of the relative progress of its ethnic and other sub-groups but has not interrogated this data further. Nor does it routinely analyze the comparative progress of gender groups. With respect to other categories of interest, the school pays special attention to the progress of its high achieving students especially at the kindergarten through grade 5 continuum where students are heterogeneously grouped, resulting in academic interventions that support their needs for challenge.

The school is keenly aware of its progress over time and as compared to neighboring schools. The school also compares its progress relative to schools in its regional cohort. The administration routinely compares progress across classrooms and grades at the elementary level and among academic subjects at the middle grades. These comparisons reveal that the school has made steady progress; overall, in increasing student achievement in all tested subjects and routinely performs at or above the City and similar schools.

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.

Especially under the current administration, the school leadership team has carried out its responsibilities to engage in a collaborative process to set goals for the school’s annual improvement. The resulting Comprehensive Education Plan sets forth high expectations for students’ increased achievement. The goals in the plan are reflected in the principal’s goals for the year and are further elucidated in her principal’s performance review. The school’s professional development plan identifies training that support the operational goals for the year. However, plans lack measurable short term, incremental goals and timeframes for reaching them. While teachers and parent representatives possess a general knowledge of the school’s yearly targets and are well informed as to the results of State testing by the principal, they do not receive copies of the Comprehensive Education Plan as a means of driving the actions of all constituencies towards improving student performance and progress.

Student progress in literacy, across the grade spectrum, has been a recent focus area for the school as data has revealed stronger overall performance in mathematics. Students’ reading levels and progress in other subjects sometimes results in adjustments in classroom placement at the end of a marking period, to good effect. Grade level expectations for the attainment of reading skills further informs this decision making. For high achieving students in grades 6 through 8, leveled classes provide opportunities for academic challenge as students are prepared to take Regents examinations in grade 8.

Academic intervention personnel provide in-class support for students identified with additional learning needs and pupil intervention plans are used to monitor the effectiveness of interventions. After school and Saturday programs provides additional sources of enrichment and support. The school provides extended-day tutoring for the small number of identified students, though poor attendance negates the effectiveness of the current design of this program, which is slated to expand as an enrichment opportunity in the future. English language learners receive in-class tutoring and special education students are educated in a variety of settings appropriate to their identified needs. However, not all personnel assigned to these groups possess the requisite licensure.

The school’s parents are extremely supportive of this neighborhood school and routinely raise substantial funding to support curricular and extracurricular programs at the school. They are partners in their children’s learning and feel welcomed by the school. They and their children receive regular written and verbal communications regarding the school’s high expectations and their progress. Awards and ceremonies encourage and reward academic achievement and attendance and numerous student performances and trips engage parents in the life of the school. Well-attended parent workshops planned by the parent coordinator serve to prepare parents to assist their children in their learning.

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 school has moved towards the full institution of the mandated curriculum under the current administration and teachers are working to embrace the components of balanced literacy, Everyday mathematics and Impact mathematics. The regional prototype, which communicates a rubric by which to measure effective implementation of the curriculum, has been used to guide implementation and reinforce expectations. The data generated by these instructional programs is, increasingly, being used by teachers to plan instruction, especially in English language arts and mathematics. The administration has communicated the expectation that the curriculum be delivered as prescribed, with a few approved adjustments, and holds teachers accountable through routine observations of instruction, lesson plans, student work, progress reports and marking period grades. Differentiation of instruction is characterized by activity and instructional grouping and is more commonly observed in elementary classrooms. Middle school teachers are beginning to receive training for differentiation. More needs to be done to help teachers to adjust instruction based on the diagnosis of individual student’s needs. Instruction is generally engaging and students appear to be actively involved in their learning, especially in classes where instructional technology is employed effectively. Students report that they love their school, their teachers and the administrators. The school is the hub of activity for the neighborhood. Students and their families are well known and supported by a stable staff. Attendance is routinely above that of City and similar schools and attendance expectations are well understood and procedures are followed to good effect.

Decisions regarding the budget, staffing and the schedule are well informed by the analysis of student achievement and other pertinent data. For example, student achievement, especially in writing at the lower grades drove the decision to employ a specialist in early childhood literacy as a coach for teachers. Similarly coaching support for English language arts at the middle school level was increased to refine writing practices and to provide mentoring for less experienced staff. Funds were allocated to increase class libraries and stock book closets in support of the heightened expectations for the implementation of balanced literacy. Instructional software was purchased to provide remediation and enrichment in some early childhood classes and the school schedule was changed to accommodate the inclusion of the extended day program within the normal dismissal time.

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 school is a desirable assignment for student teachers who provide the largest source of new teachers to the school. They must display content knowledge, a willingness to improve their practice and an inclination for collaboration. Most have had training in the use of data. New and veteran teachers are the beneficiaries of a well- developed professional development program that takes into consideration their varied needs, the needs of the school and the mandates of the region and the City. Coaches for English, mathematics, early childhood education and academic interventions provide in-class support, model lessons and provide workshops. Assistant principals conduct study groups

and conduct workshops during grade level meetings. Full day professional development programs, faculty conferences, United Federation of Teacher's workshops provide additional support for teachers' professional growth. The recent emphasis on differentiating instruction through training in the workshop model is evident although training in differentiating for specific individual needs within the classroom remains a goal.

The principal and assistant principals conduct formal evaluations of teaching as mandated and provide useful and instructive feedback to teachers regarding their instruction. Teachers are more likely to receive frequent feedback with strategies for improving instruction as a result of the routine informal visits by coaches and consultants employed for that purpose. Intervisitations have taken place but are not a widely embedded practice within the school or between schools with similar goals and grade configurations. Supporting teachers' skill development through these practices would prove beneficial.

The principal models team-based collaborative leadership to good effect. Her calm, measured and firm leadership for curricular and instructional improvement has earned the respect of staff and parents. She has refined the practices and procedures in the school which operates efficient. Teachers, administrators, and parents are empowered to participate in the school's governance through common planning time, grade level teams, academic department meetings, faculty conferences, the school leadership team, cabinet meetings and ad hoc committees such as those for assemblies, graduation and community service. Noteworthy is the principal's practice of embracing her assistant principals as equals in the administration of the school which fully empowers them to share in the leadership of the school

The school offers a variety of extracurricular activities for its students and enjoys strong relationships with local officials, charitable, academic and civic organizations. It looks to its own academic support services and programs to support students' academic goals.

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.

The school recognizes its need to set and establish more short term goals to link with the long term goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan to increase the ability to monitor progress more effectively. While interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress are not specified in the plan, the school does have practices in place to monitor the overall effectiveness of the school's functioning, particularly with respect to the instructional program. For instance, members of the cabinet conduct monthly 'walk-throughs' and report findings at grade conferences, and meetings of faculty, parents and the school leadership team. The stipulations of the regional protocol have been adjusted to address the specific needs of students and teachers at the school.

At the classroom level, progress in the delivery of instruction is informed by the regional prototype, and the analysis of teachers' progress reports and report card grades especially as compared to students' standardized test scores. Results of these analyses leads to administrative conferences with teachers, reassignment of students, or the introduction of academic interventions. Comparisons among neighboring and regional cohort schools informs, primarily, instructional programming such as the recent emphasis on more consistent delivery of balanced literacy and the decision to join with the academically oriented knowledge network.

The Princeton Review has proved less effective than anticipated in providing periodic and diagnostic assessments of student progress and at the primary level; the school has not

identified an effective periodic assessment tool. For students with special education and academic intervention students, the school has identified the need to establish interim goals for monitoring their interventions in a more timely fashion. Practices such as running records and conference notes do, however, shed light on progress and interventions are modified accordingly.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Rockwood Park School (PS/MS 207)	∅	✓	+
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	