



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Rufus King School

Elementary School 26

195-02 69th Avenue

**Queens
NY 11365**

Principal: Dr Dina Koski

Dates of review: October 29 – 30, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Janet Warner

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Rufus King School is an elementary school with 618 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 10.51% Black, 11.16% Hispanic, 14.72% White, and 63.1% Asian students. The student body includes 7.9% English language learners and 13.6% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94.9%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school engages well in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement.
- The school carefully selects core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful data.
- The school has developed a very useful and comprehensive database to track the performance and progress of all students.
- School leaders, faculty, parents and students have very high expectations of themselves and of each other.
- There are very good relationships with parents and the wider community who play a significant part in supporting the academic and personal growth of the students,
- The principal, ably assisted by her assistant principal, provides strong leadership and has the capacity to continue effecting change.
- There is a very positive atmosphere in the school based on mutual trust and respect between all staff and students.
- All assessments are tracked carefully and the results used to make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Build in more liaison time for teachers and children's services in order to improve all lines of communication.
- Further enhance the sharing of good practice for staff development purposes by increasing the opportunities for inter-class visitations.
- Further develop 'next steps' learning particularly regarding students who have just completed an English language learners program.
- Ensure that goals set in the Comprehensive Education Plan and elsewhere are specific, achievable, relevant and time-related.

Part 3: Main findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The Rufus King School serves its community well. This is the result of high quality leadership and high levels of staff collaboration. The students benefit from a safe, orderly environment where staff use their expertise to produce high quality instruction that meets students' needs. Parents hold the school in high regard and support it enthusiastically. Students enjoy their lessons, behave well and make good progress in their learning. The school environment is very conducive to good learning with stimulating displays and brightly decorated corridors, Data is used to inform instruction and the curriculum is well chosen in accordance with students' needs. All those involved with the students have high expectations and show very caring attitudes.

Areas for professional development are identified according to the analysis of data and in consultation with staff. This enables training to be focused on areas that will improve students' learning and the quality of instruction. Teachers collaborate in planning together and sharing good practice.

The school has made good progress in setting up an inquiry team. Personnel have been appointed, the target group has been identified and several meetings have already been held to plan improvement strategies. Most of the issues raised in the previous Quality Review have been tackled. A more detailed analysis of data is now carried out based on groups of learners, and student progress is tracked more closely. As a result, teaching is better aligned to students' needs. Rubrics are now used more consistently across the school to set standards in writing, and students are more involved in their own learning.

The leadership team is striving to build upon the schools strengths to further develop instructional practices and maintain the rate of progress made by the students. Everyone involved is committed to the best possible outcomes for all the students.

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 the student's progress over time.

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

The leadership at Rufus King School collects a considerable amount of data on the students. This includes teacher assessment as well as standardized scores. The school has developed a very comprehensive database in which all student information is recorded. All staff have access to this "user-friendly" device and can therefore gain information about a student and track his or her progress efficiently. The principal employs a learning support organization to ensure that all the data is disaggregated, and then used

to monitor progress in a very organized way that drives instruction. A detailed needs analysis is carried out to identify both high and low achievers in order to ensure they receive planned interventions to meet their needs. English language learners are identified according to their needs, but funding issues have meant that some language programs are not yet in place. The principal is aware of the need for a program to increase the English speaking and reading skills of students who have completed a beginners program, but who are not progressing. Data is used effectively as a measurement of performance for the school in comparison with similar schools. The administration looks at comparisons with both peer and city horizon schools in order to track the school's standing year on year. The principal has developed an on-going relationship with a local school of similar intake in order to share comparative data to help further analyze overall progress.

All teachers have received training on the use of data and testify to the fact that all the assessment tools used are updated regularly. This keeps them in line with the school curriculum, which is evolving in order to meet the learning needs of the students. They are given frequent professional development in order to keep abreast of all new initiatives. They also modify assessments, if necessary, after joint discussions across grades. The testing coordinator is responsible for turn-keying any training he receives on the new citywide data that is now being produced.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

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

In order that all faculty staff can collaborate effectively on a regular basis, outside providers allow all teachers to have an hour for lunch. Grade conferences take place on a weekly basis. These facilitate the use of data in setting rigorous goals for improvement for individuals and classes. They also allow teachers to plan strategies to meet these goals. For example, curriculum maps are regularly reviewed and updated to meet changing requirements. Particularly close attention is paid to the needs of special education students as well as those who are considered high achievers. This helps to ensure that all students make expected levels of progress and do not stagnate. The inquiry team is well established and is continuing its work on identifying groups of students whose needs could be better met in the future. The highly experienced teacher, who supervises students with individual education plans, uses both quantitative and qualitative data to identify pupils at risk. He adapts intervention programs in order to individualize the teaching of his small groups of students. In the same way, the literacy teacher stretches the high achieving students by teaching them in small groups and adapting the teaching materials used to give them suitably challenging tasks.

Consistently high expectations are relayed to all members of the school community and parents fully support the work of the school. Parents are invited to attend orientation meetings at the beginning of every year and to "Open School" week. Goals are shared at these events, and information is given about what levels students are expected to achieve. Attendance is generally good so parents are able to determine if their child is making expected progress. Parents are kept very well informed about their child's progress and performance. A 'home-school' book, notes and telephone calls are used to alert parents to any concerns at any stage during the year.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The school’s exempt status ensures that it has the freedom to choose the curriculum that it judges best meets the needs of the students in order to promote success. The Macmillan, McGraw, Hill balanced literacy program entitled “*Treasures*” was chosen specifically for its seamless approach to the teaching of English language arts across all levels of ability. Assessments show if children are “below”, “on” or “beyond” the level expected so that lessons can be planned to extend and enrich as well as reinforce learning. Everyday Math includes end of unit tests for the same purpose. Teachers use graded readers and book levels are monitored on a regular basis. All assessments are meticulously recorded in assessment folders in each class, which are then monitored by the administration team. This information is passed on to the next grade. Other monitoring includes the inspection of plan books, work sampling and frequent informal observations when students are questioned in order to assess if successful learning is taking place. The administration considers the implications of assessment data and expected levels of progress when making strategic decisions. For example, a new literacy program has been purchased because it is more in line with students’ learning needs. A literacy teacher is scheduled to work with both lower and higher achievers in order to give both groups specific teaching at their own level.

The school provides a rich and varied program of learning within the school day. In addition to the core curriculum, lessons are provided in art, ballroom dancing, music, drama, sports and computers. The quality and range of the curriculum has a very positive influence on students’ enjoyment of school and is one factor contributing to high attendance rates. However, there is not such a varied program available to students outside the classroom due to transport difficulties. They felt this was to their disadvantage. Students commented that one of the “best” things at school was their teachers and the way they “made learning fun”. There are high levels of trust and respect between all staff and students, which helps to engender a safe and secure environment. Systems to ensure good attendance are very clear and parents are contacted at an early stage on the rare occasions when there is an unexplained absence. As a result, attendance rates are high.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to 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 has well established and effective systems for monitoring the quality of instruction and for developing teachers’ skills. The teaching staff stated that they were very used to the administration visiting all classrooms on a regular basis. They felt that they were given constructive feedback at all times and were given support in order to develop their skills. The focus for formal observations is aligned to professional development in order to ensure that such training is effectively embedded in classroom practices. In addition, teachers work together in a very collaborative way to share good practices. They jointly develop teaching strategies and pool their resources. Although new teachers are given specific time to visit other classrooms in order to observe good practice, such observations are not routinely arranged for other members of staff. New

teachers are well supported by mentors and coaches as well as by all their colleagues in the grade.

All children's service providers meet regularly together to discuss students' needs and the testing coordinator ensures that relevant data is available to inform the decisions that are made. Teachers are involved in discussions around identifying low-achieving students but do not always have regular follow-up meetings with the service providers, although informal discussions around student needs do take place when there is time.

The school has very good procedures for smooth day-to-day running resulting in a calm, well-ordered atmosphere in the classrooms. There are well developed systems of rewards and sanctions ensuring that the students feel valued. Parents testified to the fact that their children were always given incentives to do their best and rewarded for their efforts. Students enjoy their lessons, behave well and make good progress in their learning. The school is enriched by the links it has developed with the local assembly who have contributed to its funds allowing extra materials and equipment to be purchased. Outside agencies are also involved in providing some of the extra-curricular opportunities that benefit the students.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

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

The school's improvement plans are working documents that change and develop according to goals set by the leadership team. A continual dialogue with teachers ensures that plans are revised and instructional approaches changed according to their self-evaluations. The coaches work with teachers to embed new approaches and techniques aligned to programs. This is followed up with observations to check that classroom practices are consistent with training. These processes are carried out throughout the year, but do not involve specific time frames or measurable targets. The principal is aware that the interim goals set for student outcomes need to be time limited and be measurable.

Periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools, such as those linked to reading levels and "Just Right" books, are consistently used to measure progress towards meeting goals for improving the achievement of all the students. Frequent evaluations of progress based on data inform the work of the academic intervention services team, as well as providing the basis for modifications to individual education plans. Teachers constantly revise their plans in response to assessment outcomes.

The principal and her team are committed to ensuring that the school continues to "move on" and improve as a learning environment. The school is always striving to involve all parents in every aspect of their children's learning in order to give them every chance to succeed. Future plans also include further investment in technology to enhance the quality of instruction provided. This forms part of the principal's vision of continually striving for excellence.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Q026 - The Rufus King School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.					
To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.					
To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?			X		
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X	