



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Renaissance Middle School

Middle School 192

**109 - 89 204 Street
Queens
NY 11412**

Principal: Harriett Diaz

Dates of review: May 19 - 20, 2008

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Renaissance School is a middle school with 615 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 93% Black, 5% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7.5% English language learners and 20% 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 93.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 78% eligibility.

The Renaissance School is divided into four small learning communities or academies, University Prep, Sports & Medicine, Multimedia and Arts & Humanities. The school anticipates losing a half floor of classrooms next year due to an expansion of a grade 6 through 12 school that shares the building. The principal reports that high student mobility is a challenge in that the majority of students reside in some type of foster care. The improvement in student performance resulted in the school being designated as a "School of Excellence" in 2007 by the New York State Education Department.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal expresses a very clear vision, is passionate about moving the school forward and is well respected as a strong and caring leader.
- Students, parents and teachers share high expectations for academic performance.
- The school fosters an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff, and students and students learn in a positive and safe environment.
- Dedicated teaching staff members value collegiality and professional development and frequently observe and support each other.
- The school successfully engages parents as partners in their children's education.
- The school focuses well on providing academic intervention for its most needy students.
- Well established academic policies such as school-wide grading and homework policies establish clear expectations for students.
- Teachers suitably use periodic assessment data to plan instruction.
- The school is well focused on providing a wide variety of activities to support the academic, physical and social emotional needs of every student.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish guidelines for including standard components in teacher assessment notebooks and for frequency of data collection.
- Expand professional development for the administration and interpretation of key assessments and student conference notes.
- Set challenging and realistic goals with students, clearly identifying specific interim and end targets so that students can articulate them.
- Carefully analyze causal factors in day to day student performance to set measurable interim goals for both students and teachers.
- Evaluate the current literacy programs effectiveness in facilitating meaningful student data and ongoing achievement.
- Develop strategic long-term plans with measurable interim and final outcomes.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal's recognized leadership and absolute commitment motivates all community members to have high expectations. English language arts and math scores have shown a continuous upward trend because of this school's directed focus on raising the academic achievement of every student. Student interests and needs are matched with instructional programs within one of the four themed academies.

The school has made progress in following recommendations from last year's Quality Review. To improve differentiation and proficiency in data gathering, coaches and the resource center teacher now conduct workshops on accessing and interpreting results from periodic assessments. The school expanded its use of teacher assessment notebooks to include science and social studies. Guidelines for content of assessment books and expectations for a timeline of entries, however, are not clearly established. To improve long term strategic planning, the school has adopted the use of the Professional Teaching Standards to guide them in more rigorous planning, goal setting and instruction. Long term strategic planning and setting of specific, measurable, clearly articulated goals, however, is not yet fully in place.

The school's inquiry team assists teachers to access and analyze periodic assessment results and to understand interim benchmark goal setting better. School leaders and teachers help students to accelerate their learning by providing careful attention to their social-emotional, physical and academic needs. The school offers a comprehensive array of intervention and enrichment activities during non-school hours and vacations. Students acknowledge that these programs help them to do better in school. The school conducts outreach to ensure excellent daily attendance and wide participation in extended day activities. Students report that the principal cares about them and that their teachers are always available to assist them.

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 proficient.

The school does a good job of establishing baseline data for all students. It administers pre-assessments and mock exams at the beginning of every school year and to newly admitted students. Administration expects on-going data collection and teachers conform to this, but overall guidelines for data collection are not firmly established.

There is inconsistency in the quality and breadth of the entries and data from teacher to teacher. The school uses periodic assessment results to monitor the achievement and progress of all students including special education and English language learners. However, clear year-to-year comparisons are not evident. Special education students made exemplary gains in both English language arts and math last year meriting the school extra credit in its progress report. The school has done an effective job in analyzing differences in the performance of gender groups. Recognizing differences in ways that boys and girls performed in literacy and math, the school conducted extensive research on studying gender differences and same sex instructional models. As a result, the school piloted several all-boys and all-girls classes this year. They also supplemented their literature collection to better match the boys' preferences. The school notes improvement in behavior and motivation in these classes. The school is conscientious about regular scheduling of professional development in data use. Teachers meet twice monthly at a mandated faculty conference and a common prep period. In addition, the school capitalizes on its staff members' commitment to their own learning by offering frequent "chat and chew" lunchtime professional development opportunities which teachers state have helped them to use data better.

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 proficient.

The school pays careful attention to ensuring that all students, especially those most in need of improvement, reach or exceed grade performance standards. They use rubrics across content areas to grade students against standards and have students evaluate their own work. High needs students in several categories made significant progress last year. Frequent collaboration among teachers and support personnel is school strength and insures that a watchful eye is kept on the progress of all students. However, rigorous objective goals and time frames are not well established or recorded. Although students acknowledge that their teachers tell them what they need to do to improve and are aware of strategies, they cannot articulate personal strategic goals. When asked to state their goals or targets, students voice the goal of achieving a numerical score equivalent to Level 3 or 4 performance. Student-teacher conferencing is not embedded practice as a positive means to self-evaluate and set learning goals. Students are aware that teacher assessment notebooks record their progress, but do not recognize that conferencing is an on-going way to enhance their learning. Rather, students state that conferencing is something that is only done when their teacher notices that they are having a problem.

The school does a very good job in fostering high expectations for academic success. When parents and students were asked if the school had high expectations, both groups smiled broadly and shouted "Yes!" and were eager to talk about this. Leaders suitably share whole school goals with the school community. Everyone understands that the number one goal is for high achievement. However, leaders have not yet made the plans to achieve this goal transparent enough to ensure all members of staff understand the role they must play in this work. The school effectively uses constant personal outreach, academic updates sent to parents every six weeks, an automated phone message system and a secure two-way communication system. These avenues of

communication have increased parent support and have contributed to the high daily attendance rate during the regular and extended school day.

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 proficient.

As the numbers of students reaching proficiency has grown, the school has found that its core literacy program, America’s Choice, does not sufficiently meet all needs. It has not developed a long-term plan for addressing this need as yet. However, school leadership has wisely made adaptations, recognizing that the program’s writing component does not sufficiently prepare students for the English language arts exam. The school strategically analyzed student-writing samples and identified weak use of vocabulary. Leaders made use of a consultant university to do writing professional development, enabling analysis of writing process and strategic use of graphic organizers to help students. The school supplemented its literacy program by adding a wider variety of leveled books across content areas to capture students’ interest. However, classroom books are not leveled in every room and students rely on teacher input or scanning to determine suitability of books for independent reading.

The principal strategically makes budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions based on data. For example, she hired an extra math teacher for grade 7 based on data revealing that the grade had slippages in math performance. This reduced math class sizes and insured that all special education self-contained classes were serviced by a licensed math teacher. The school does a good job in providing a broad and engaging curriculum. Last year, students from its robotics classes placed 6th out of 86 entries in a City robotics competition and the school’s gospel chorus participated in a national competition. Students state that their teachers trust them and that they have an open relationship, as in a family. They appreciate that their principal and teachers understand them and that help is readily available. The school has well established systems to monitor attendance that has promoted a rising attendance rate, which is now over 94%.

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 does a good job of implementing clear procedures that encourage effective student learning and good discipline. Students report that discipline is “strict” but “fair” and that “there is always a consequence.” Based on data from last year’s learning survey, the school effectively renewed its focus to improve student engagement. To achieve this, teachers studied the Professional Teaching Standards for creating and maintaining effective environment. As a result, the school instituted a teacher check-list for room environment. Teachers acknowledge improvement and all classrooms now mirror this initiative with clearly posted routines, rubrics, and attractive displays.

Supervisors clearly set expectations and promote accountability by visiting classrooms daily and checking teacher assessment notebooks routinely. Teachers state that school supervisors “absolutely” hold them accountable. Processes are in place to insure regular opportunities for close collaboration and planning including visits to colleagues’ classrooms accompanied by supervisors. To better align academic and personal development, the principal and staff members attended a conference to study the importance of connecting student life experiences and interests to their learning. They adopted the statement, “If you don’t know me, you can’t teach me.” This led to the development of mission, vision, and passion statements, and emphasis on vocabulary development to promote higher achievement on exams. As a result, students communicate that not meeting standards is not an option and readily recite their vision statement, “Excellence without Excuses.” Effective partnerships with community-based organizations go beyond enrichment. For example, students volunteer at a shelter, provide tutoring to elementary school children and have career education opportunities by shadowing health care professionals at a local hospital.

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 proficient.

The school has set performance goals through 2010, but has not developed a strategic long-term plan to achieve these goals, defining measurable interim and final outcomes. Students and staff often voice the goal of reaching level 3 or 4, but the setting of interim benchmark goals to learn specific skills needed for higher achievement is not well established. The school, however, has been working toward change and leaders recognize that setting short-term benchmarks is an area for improvement. It has increased involvement of teachers and coaches working together by instituting curriculum planning retreats. Teachers have improved understanding of standards and make meaningful contribution to curriculum maps by working with the new math coach to match State standards with the Impact Math program. Observing that students did not do well in math word problems, the school sent teachers to outside professional development. This helped support increased student usage of math vocabulary. Teachers and administration have begun to use of Acuity periodic assessments to adjust instruction to meet learner needs. When results indicated weakness in number relationships, a “problem of the day” was instituted to revisit and reinforce key concepts. In addition, the school uses current and past results to anticipate the needs of incoming students. It offers a summer math program to incoming grade 6 students and to its current grade 6 entering grade 7. The aim of the program is to ensure student success by targeting prevalent areas of need.

While it is evident that periodic assessment results influence interventions and professional development, it is not clear how this influence this information influences planning. Although, one of the assistant principals stated, “It is important for teachers to use periodic assessments to judge the effectiveness of instruction,” teachers do give enough attention to adjusting day-to-day practice to aid learning. The school has identified this as a goal and has begun to make changes. For example, it realized that while students could give back information, they were not as good at applying their knowledge independently. The school then analyzed teacher prompts to make changes in instructional questioning techniques.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Renaissance 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 rigorous, 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 and tardiness?				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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				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

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped