



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Richmondtown School

Elementary School 023

**30 Natick Street
Staten Island
NY 10306**

Principal: Mark Bronstein

Dates of review: November 20 - 21, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Elizabeth Owens

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Richmondtown is an elementary school with 564 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 11% Hispanic, 83% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 93%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's commitment to high expectations is shared by the whole school community and underpins instructional methods.
- The leadership team keeps the school under constant review and makes the necessary adjustments to maximize success.
- Based on their extensive knowledge and understanding of the students, the staff plans effective, differentiated work programs that help students meet classroom goals.
- The assistant principal and the literacy coach are highly skilled and work closely with the principal to provide high quality advice to staff.
- The school makes good use of a wide range of assessments to judge student progress, and decide their next steps.
- The teaching of reading and writing is highly successful and accelerates student progress.
- The learning environment is full of interest and helps stimulate student engagement and improve their achievement.
- The students have good knowledge of their personal goals and how to reach them.
- Parents provide powerful support to the school community.
- Students flourish in a secure and safe working environment.

What the school needs to improve

- Widen the analysis of data to include the achievement and progress of different ethnic groups.
- Increase the opportunities for staff to meet together formally to share classroom strategies for accelerating student progress.
- Provide opportunities to further develop students' writing skills in cross-curricular settings.
- Increase the use of technology in classroom instruction.

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.

Differentiated teaching, an area for improvement identified in the last Quality Review, is now well established in all grades. All teachers maintain effective assessment binders and running records, which inform grouping according to ability and the need for student support in specific skills. The school has increased the number of part-time staff for every grade since the last review to enrich opportunities for science, art and drama in particular, and to support differentiated activities in general. The school is able to focus purposefully on the least and most able students. There is good communication and teamwork between members of the leadership team which results in effective strategic planning to meet school goals.

The school has a very impressive understanding of individual student performance, which is systematically shared with all staff. There is full professional support for training staff in data analysis. All instructional methods are informed by data. The staff's thorough understanding of the students underpins their instruction. Interventions are carefully organized and special education classes are well managed. The needs of special education students and English language learners are carefully tracked, but the school does not collect information on the achievement and progress of the different ethnic groups. Senior staff monitor the school's progress towards the goals in the Comprehensive Education plan robustly and regularly evaluate the school's strategies for raising achievement.

The school communicates high expectation to parents and students. Parents are supportive and students know they are expected to do very well. The school's approach to the teaching of reading and writing is remarkably successful. There is a strong emphasis on matching strategies to student need so that all students are given the full opportunity to succeed. The curriculum is broad and stimulating, but the school provides few opportunities for students in all grades to develop technological skills by working on the computers in the classroom. Attendance is rigorously monitored and absence investigated. The school is secure and safe and the needs of the whole child are well met. Teachers make the most of informal meetings to share their knowledge of the students but there is insufficient time for them to meet more formally to share classroom strategies to further accelerate student achievement. Professional development is focused and effective. The principal, supported by his senior teachers, guides the school with complete commitment to the students. Together, they have a clear vision for success.

The inquiry team has made a good start with their focused work. All members of the inquiry team have attended workshops and received training on the use of the ARIS and ACUITY data systems.

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 has a good knowledge of student performance and progress based on an impressively wide range of assessments. It is able to identify the needs of individual students including those who are not meeting the standards and need additional support. The staff are well trained in use of the data and have benefited from the help of the school's own data specialist. The inquiry team has analyzed standardized test data to focus school wide on enhancing reading skills even further. The leadership team and all staff have a good understanding of the performance and progress of special education students. A parent with a child who had recently transferred to Richmondtown praised the great efficiency and understanding the school had shown in interpreting and supporting the child's special needs. Although the school analyzes data on the relative performance of boys and girls, and of its English language learners, it does not collect and analyze data relating to the achievement of different ethnic groups. The school does not exchange information on its performance with similar schools.

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.

The administration, teachers and intervention specialists meet monthly to review data for all students based on the wide range of assessment information available to them. The data is used to plan differentiated instruction to target the needs of the very able pupils, as well as those at risk of underachievement. The school plans its academic intervention program to meet the students' goals and bi-monthly meetings of the pupil personnel team review these interventions. Students conference regularly with their teachers, discussing their strengths and weaknesses. Useful rubrics provide a good structure for these meetings. The student portfolios contain a comprehensive collection of student work with assessments in math, reading and writing, providing authentic evidence of student learning, individual performance, attitude, behavior and experience. High quality work displayed in the corridors and classrooms confirms the school's very high expectations. The students know their goals very well and understand that their teachers and their parents want them to aim high. This shows in the students' commitment to work.

The school's relationship with parents is well developed and productive. The school knows its families very well and provides support and counseling where needed. There is an excellent parent coordinator, and strong parental involvement contributes to on-going student success. The teachers make sure that they are available to speak to parents and hear any concerns. Information on how to support their child's learning is provided during open school week and on family nights, and through a range of activities including parent workshops and curriculum conferences. There is a program of support with homework and reading and writing instruction which is well supported.

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.

There is a strong whole school focus on reading and writing and a plentiful supply of carefully chosen books. The school’s writing workshops enable students to readily assess their competence against their rubrics, and to compare their performance with each other, and this generates high levels of student interest. Some kindergarten students read and write to a very high standard indeed, using sophisticated tactics of self-guidance and correction. The literacy coach has worked with each teacher to form a fully developed curriculum for reading on each grade, which includes strategies for differentiation. *Readers Theatre* caters for different groups and abilities. However, there are insufficient opportunities for applying these skills in a wider variety of cross-curricular contexts.

Focused and grade specific writing binders have helped the teachers to commit to a uniform curriculum, which includes effective strategies for differentiation. The curriculum has good breadth and is enhanced by a focus on the arts for all grades and a strong music program for grades 3 through 5. Drama, gardening, cheerleading, girl scouts and sport offer further enrichment. There are good facilities for technology, including a computer lab, wireless internet and a laptop trolley which supplements computers in each classroom. However, there are too few opportunities for students to make use of these classroom resources.

The principal has used the school budget wisely, providing additional teacher time to support greater differentiation and reducing class size for kindergarten through grade 3. In the absence of sufficient funds for a math coach, it uses an existing expert on the staff to support math teaching. The principal’s open door policy signals a friendly, committed atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in which all staff help each other. The children also respect the staff, and each other. The staff monitor attendance rigorously. The parents say, “The school is big on attendance, which keeps us up to scratch”.

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 administration conducts a regular and rigorous program of formal observation and informal classroom visits to monitor instruction. They give the teachers helpful feedback which gives a point of praise as well as a point for growth. The assistant principal and the literacy coach provide high quality instructional support. The coach identifies and supports need through workshops, mentoring, intra-classroom visiting, model lessons and administrative support. Staff development programs strike a good balance between meeting school needs and staff requests, and range, for example, from an opportunity to watch team teaching in a recent writer’s workshop to enrichment training for teachers of the honors classes.

Teachers make good use of common planning time and often meet together informally before, after school, and at weekends to share their knowledge of the students. However, the time available is insufficient for them to discuss in depth and share ideas for instructional strategies. The school is able to deploy a psychologist, social worker,

counselor and other support systems who provide good support for students' particular academic and personal needs. The school environment is warm, inviting and child-centered. The discipline code is well established and parents give it strong support. As a result, behavior is very good.

A variety of fund raising activities enhance student awareness of those less fortunate than themselves. The school has created effective partnerships with a large number of arts and educational organizations which support the academic and personal growth of the students very well.

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 principal says, "I'm here for my kids". His commitment shows in the thorough knowledge he has of each child and every family, and in the friendly and purposeful atmosphere that pervades the school. The students appreciate his interest in them as individuals. His vision for the school is driven by very high expectations and his staff fully supports him in striving to achieve the best for all students.

The school's goals are clearly defined and shared and the incremental steps to reaching them carefully timed. The principal, through his careful monitoring, keeps the school under constant review and takes swift action to make improvements. Senior staff evaluate all available evidence at monthly meetings and make appropriate modifications to keep the school on track towards its goals. Curriculum maps are rigorously up-dated three times a year. There are discussions in grade meetings at the end of the year to identify success and revise plans for the following year. The Comprehensive Education Plan provides a good basis for planning. It sets clear goals which staff monitor robustly. These processes have ensured that the school has achieved considerable success in driving up achievement.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Richmondtown School	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▶	✓	+	◇
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 make 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	