



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Renaissance Parkway School**

**Elementary - Middle School 280**

**3202 Steuben Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 104067**

**Principal: James Weeks**

**Dates of review: March 31 - April 1, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: David Wynford Jones**

## 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**

Progress made since the last review  
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 Renaissance School is an elementary-middle school with 777 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 17% Black, 63% Hispanic, 12% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 92.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 71% eligibility.

A mixed grade 2 and grade 3, self-contained, bridge class was formed in September 2007.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The administration team provides good leadership and ensures the school operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis.
- The executive team provides good support and promotes opportunities for staff professional development to improve instruction.
- Teachers work together well and are keen to share and develop their professional skills and expertise.
- Induction procedures for new members of staff are good.
- Systems to track individual students' progress and monitor attainment are in place.
- Students who find learning difficult are supported well in the self-contained class.
- The curriculum is well thought out to provide students with a themed approach which helps them enjoy learning and to see the links between subjects.
- Students know their goals and are given advice on how they can be achieved.
- Students behave well and enjoy their school because relationships are good.
- Links with the high school are used effectively to promote female students' self esteem through the creation of a group known as DIVAS.

### What the school needs to improve

- Use data analysis more effectively to plan for greater challenge for all students, but particularly those who are higher achieving so that they can make better progress.
- Ensure all teachers, but especially those in the middle school, include differentiated activities in their lessons to extend students' learning.
- Refine the analysis of assessment data to identify gender, ethnic or other groups of students who are likely to under-achieve and provide appropriate support.
- Undertake a more detailed analysis of the rate of progress groups of students make in the different subjects and address any anomalies that exist.

## 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 well developed.**

The school is well led and managed. Members of the administration team have complementary strengths which ensure all aspects of the school's work are monitored, evaluated and challenged effectively. All members of the school community appreciate the importance of assessment data and how it is used to promote student learning. As a result, the school now assesses student progress accurately and provides support for those students who find learning difficult. The school has recognized that some of the higher achieving students are not making sufficient progress. This is because some instruction is not differentiated and students are not challenged sufficiently in those lessons. However, the administration is taking steps to address this issue.

Systems for assessing, recording and analyzing students' attainment are developing well. However, the analysis of the data does not go deep enough to identify small groups of students who are not making the expected rate of progress or to identify trends over time. The administration is aware of differences in the students' progress in different subjects. However, this has not been analyzed sufficiently at grade level in the middle school, to inform instruction or make adjustments to the curriculum content.

Relationships within the school are good. As a result, students enjoy school. They feel safe and are polite and well behaved. They are clear about their goals and appreciate the guidance from members of staff on how to make progress in their work. The teachers are enthusiastic and work together well as a team. This is because the principal has placed great emphasis on collaborative work. He recognizes that all members of staff have a fundamental role to play in the development of the school.

The classrooms, particularly in the elementary school, contain many stimulating displays of student work which promote learning and reflect the range of subjects within the well thought out curriculum. There is a strong emphasis on English language arts and the students' recognition of words and their ability to spell correctly.

The inquiry team is in place and has already met several times. All members of the team contribute fully to the discussions and are developing ideas on how the strategies can be adapted to monitor and promote whole school development. Good links are made to the recent whole school learning style survey and effectively informs future actions. The school has taken appropriate steps to address the issues from the last review. Students are much more aware of their levels and the progress they make. Teachers are increasingly using data to inform instruction, but this remains variable. There are now systems for interim assessments in all areas including literacy.

## **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 school has effective systems in place to gather information about how well students are performing. The administration recognizes the importance of analyzing and using data to understand student progress and ensure this continues. The principal carefully checks the performance of the school against others and in so doing identifies areas to drive up achievement further. The administration promotes the understanding and use of data amongst all members of staff. As a result, the vast majority of faculty members have a good understanding of the use and application of data. The administration is planning further training to ensure this is true for all teachers. During grade planning sessions, the English language arts and math coaches support the teachers well in analyzing and interpreting the data. The school has introduced assessment binders into all classes to good effect. In addition, the administration is rightly involving staff in developing and piloting different methods of recording assessment data to improve practice further. They are planning to adopt the best practice throughout the school. As a result, staff are familiar with the data and its use for promoting higher achievement.

Class teachers keep a close check on the progress made by the individual students in their class. Staff have a very good understanding of the needs and capabilities of special education students and English language learners. Their progress is monitored carefully, parents are informed and intervention strategies are adopted or adapted should the need arise. Students in the self-contained class are monitored closely to ensure they make good progress.

The performance of ethnic and gender groups is monitored at whole school level. However, the analysis has not been refined to consider the performance of students in the different grades. As a result, the school is not aware of any patterns or trends of any underperforming group or groups as they move through the school. Consequently, the school does not make adjustments to instruction and the curriculum.

**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 set realistic whole school goals based on the careful scrutiny of data. However, the administration does not adequately compare the progress between subjects at whole school or grade level to identify underperformance in a subject in order to inform the strategic planning for improvement. Teachers generally make good use of the information they have collected in order to set next steps for individual students. Students are well informed about the progress they make during the year. They understand their proficiency rate scores in English language arts and math. They reflect on their work and set themselves goals to match or exceed the expected age related progress. This good practice leads to high academic expectations. Parents are aware of the high expectations

that students will behave well in the classroom and around the school. Any incident of bullying or inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and is dealt with effectively.

Staff are skilful at promoting the performance of those students who are experiencing the greatest difficulty in making progress. The principal effectively deploys staff to ensure that students' needs are met, particularly those in the self-contained class. The inquiry team tracks and monitors the progress of students in greatest need carefully. The administration has recently appreciated that many higher achieving students are not making enough progress and is beginning to address the issue through raising staff awareness.

Links with parents are good. They say the school has become much more open and parent friendly over the last twelve months and they are very pleased with the way in which the school treats them. One parent stated, "The principal cares about the students, he wants them to do well and welcomes parental involvement." Others agreed. The parent coordinator plays an effective and important role in promoting and consolidating this partnership. Parents are kept well informed on their child's progress and appreciate receiving their child's proficiency rating score in English language arts and math, together with the advice as to how to help their child progress. Teachers make themselves available at the beginning and end of each day. Parents feel that all the staff provide their children with a good level of pastoral care and promote high standards of behavior.

**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 provides a stimulating curriculum. It is well established in the elementary school and is being consolidated in the middle school. The school has successfully undertaken much work to develop a thematic approach. This links learning well. It provides opportunities for the consolidation of the students' basic skills and for them to see the associations between subjects. Teachers provide stimulating lessons that inspire students to work hard and want to learn. However, some teachers, particularly in the middle school, are not as skilful as others in planning instruction that matches up with the different needs of the students. In these lessons, there is a clear lack of differentiation in the activities the students are required to complete. As a result, not all students make sufficient progress. Students are happy in school, saying they particularly enjoy the gym lessons and opportunities to work together. The range and number of activities both within and outside the school day promotes students' interest in learning. Students appreciate the outside school activities, such as the music and chess clubs and attendance is good. The school plans to extend the range of activities for the older students following their enthusiasm.

Staff, parents and the students respect the principal and there is a high level of mutual trust and respect around the school. The principal uses data skillfully to make decisions about how best to use the resources at his disposal. Staff are deployed well. Prudent management of the finances has ensured funds are available for the continued expansion and consolidation of staffing and resources as the school expands.

**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.**

There is a structured program of formal and informal visits to classes to assess the quality of instruction. As a result, the administration have identified accurately where teaching is less strong, and has put into place structured and effective support to bring all teachers' skills and understanding up to the level of the best. This includes opportunities to take part in centrally organized professional development courses and training in school. A program of inter-visitation is set up. Staff, particularly in the elementary grades, have good opportunities to share good practice in grade meetings and see each other teach. There are good induction procedures for teachers. This includes arrangements for "buddy teachers" and a mentor. The school fosters teamwork well. All teachers appreciate the support this offers and the opportunities to review each other's work and improve their own practice. The school has a calm and productive feel to it.

The school has strong partnerships with numerous local businesses and others. This results in good opportunities for the students to develop their academic and personal growth. Members of the New York Basket Ball team provide good role models for students in grades 3 and 4 when they help the students learn to read. Older female students have bonded with students in the high school and created a group known as DIVAS (diverse, intelligent, virtuous, academic sisters). This is effective in promoting their self-esteem.

**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 has a clear view of the school's performance and how it can be improved. These are reflected in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan which sets out the goals clearly. The principal is responsive to new information and, following due consideration, takes steps to bring about improvement, even though it may represent challenges. He does this sensitively by working with staff and not through direction. Staff know and understand this vision of working as a team and are committed to it. The principal is committed to ensuring that all members of staff value and use assessment data effectively to plan the work to challenge students so that they make good progress.

As a result, teachers carefully monitor individual students' progress through on going assessments and regular testing. This information is being used increasingly well to set the next steps in their learning. Periodic individual conferences ensure students know how well they are progressing and helps in confirming what still needs to be done. Support staff meet together with teachers regularly to evaluate the progress made by special education students and by those students who are causing concern. During these meetings, goals and strategies are adjusted to ensure that each student remains firmly on track. Although the school has effective systems and structures for monitoring progress these are not yet sufficiently refined to identify the progress of smaller groups of students.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Renaissance School</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school ...</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do ...</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					<b>X</b>

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>