



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

John B. Russwurm

Elementary School 197

**2230 5th Avenue
New York
NY 10037**

Principal: Renardo Wright

Dates of review: November 17 - 18, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Grossman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John B. Russwurm is an elementary school with 556 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 71% Black, 26% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 89.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 71% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The John B. Russwurm School is rightly proud of its place in the local community. Students, parents, teachers and representatives from community organizations have all been inspired by the principal in his efforts to provide students with rich experiences in a safer and secure learning environment. Rituals and routines, such as the daily recitation of the school pledge, emphasize the school pride that exists and reinforce the sense of personal and communal responsibility. The school has strong roots in the Harlem community; several partnerships, such as the Harlem Children's Zone, have resulted in attracting additional resources or enhancements to the school, such as classroom volunteers and the renovation of the gymnasium and auditorium.

Since the previous quality review, however, the school has not capitalized on this strong foundation. It has made minimal progress in addressing the areas for improvement. Some programs have been brought in to enrich the learning for higher achieving students. However, classroom instruction is not rigorous enough and teaching and learning are not differentiated sufficiently to meet the needs of students, particularly the highest achievers.

The school has used data reasonably well to reach its current level of achievement, but has not taken its analysis to the next level in order to engage more deeply in action planning, curriculum mapping or monitoring progress now that the student body is beginning to achieve higher levels. There are school-wide goals in English language arts and math that are known to everyone, but interim benchmarking, links to grade goals, and revision of plans are not fully formed. Teachers do not share short-term goals with students or their parents, which limits their ability to gauge progress toward long-term goals.

This year, the school welcomed a greater number of new teachers than is typical. Some of these staff have already demonstrated their commitment by developing leadership skills through joining the inquiry team. Teachers feel supported professionally, and the administration has some sense of where each teacher's strengths and weaknesses lie. However, individual professional development plans and feedback to teachers are generally informal and do not offer teachers precise steps for improvement or enable school leaders to monitor progress or evaluate the impact of professional development on student outcomes.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has a strong sense of purpose with all members of the community committed to the students in a positive, trusting climate in which students, parents and teachers feel safe and supported.
- The school provides a range of interesting experiences for many students through its collaborations with a plethora of distinctive community organizations and initiatives.
- The school has made good progress in helping staff understand the importance of using data, particularly in English language arts and math, through the work of its inquiry team.
- Teachers receive knowledgeable support from coaches and consultants, which is beginning to have a positive impact on improving teachers' use of data in planning lessons in English language arts.
- The principal has been proactive in using a range of data to make strategic decisions about personnel and student grouping.

What the school needs to improve

- Rigorously analyze all relevant data so that trends in the performance of all groups are identified, monitored and used in planning challenging curricula to meet the needs of all students, particularly high achievers.
- Set precise, differentiated, annual goals for student achievement based on individual starting points in all core subjects and monitor progress through accurate interim analysis of progress towards these goals.
- Share goals with students and parents so that they can track progress towards long-term goals, and growth in skills, against the precise steps identified in teachers' planning.
- Create systems to ensure meaningful and developmental feedback for all staff so they are enabled to recognize successes and understand what they need to do to improve teaching and learning.
- Improve planning and instruction through focused observation, monitoring and support so that teachers work consistently and effectively to raise student achievement.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school gathers and generates a good range of data in English language arts and math through relevant State and school-wide assessments. Teachers use these data sources periodically in planning to determine broad goals for students and grades in literacy and math, as well as to "red flag" students who may need support in these areas. The school has examined the results of the State tests in science and social studies, but individual, grade, and school-wide assessments in these areas do not occur on a regular basis. There is little evidence of the use of consistently meaningful data to support instruction in writing or for project work in social studies, science or the Arts.

The principal's analysis of school-wide performance data led to the creation of a heterogeneous and two single-sex classes in the sixth grade. He is monitoring the performance of all three classes to determine the effectiveness of these groupings, although it is too early to gauge the impact. The school has analyzed the achievement gap between boys and girls, but only in the upper grades. Lower achieving students are clearly identified and their progress is tracked carefully, resulting in steady progress for many of these students. Similar identification and tracking for higher achieving students, special education students, and English language learners are not as thorough. The inquiry team is focusing on students currently achieving in the bottom third, but has not yet narrowed down to a finely grained focus.

Communication between the school, parents and students is sound. Progress reports in English language arts and math are sent home to all families in between reporting periods, and parents find these useful. However, they do not provide precise information about the specific next steps or skills to be mastered to enable students to move to the next level, and there is limited information regarding other subject areas. The principal has implemented an open door policy, and parents are invited to offer feedback about their child on the report card and through parent-teacher conferences. However, the school lacks consistent, ongoing mechanisms for this feedback to influence the progress of every student on a regular basis.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal has set broad achievement goals for the whole school in English language arts and math based on the school's Progress Report. Every teacher and many

students are aware that the goals are to increase the proportion of students achieving grade level standards in English language arts from 50 to 72 percent, and from 63 to 75 percent in math. These goals represent the target necessary to raise the school's Progress Report grade, but they do not relate closely enough to what is possible and are not differentiated by grade, class, or subgroup.

Students' knowledge of their goals is patchy. Long-term reading goals for students are determined through the Accelerated Reader program. This enables students, in reading, to know both their current level and their long-term goal. Some students are aware of specific areas in which they need to improve, but they are not clear about the precise steps to take, or which skills they need to improve. While the school tracks progress periodically in English language arts and math, there are no precise timeframes to monitor student growth towards goals.

The school leadership team is involved in constructing the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Analysis of State tests leads to the establishment of broad goals and action plans, but these do not relate closely enough to the needs of individuals and groups. In addition, specific timeframes and benchmarks have not been set to measure improvements or adjust goals and plans.

Parents praise the staff for having high expectations for work habits and behavior. The principal, recognizing long-standing concerns about attendance, has now taken positive steps, including incentive programs, to improve attendance rates. Recently, attendance has begun to climb over 90% for several weeks in a row, which is encouraging but still not high enough.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is undeveloped with proficient features.

The school has not done enough to ensure that the curriculum is flexible enough to meet the needs of its students. It utilizes a balanced literacy approach in reading and writing, and follows the "Everyday Math" curriculum but does not adapt curriculum plans to provide the right level of challenge, particularly for high achievers. Curriculum outlines exist in English language arts and math. These identify units of study and skills to be developed, but do not detail the different skills and outcomes for all levels and groups of students. In social studies and science, teachers follow a scope and sequence, which serves as the basis for instruction, but there is little alignment between grades and classes, and little evidence of rigor or ongoing assessment in these subject areas.

Differentiation is at an early stage of development. It is inconsistent across classrooms, and higher achieving students are not sufficiently challenged in math, science and social studies. Teachers use students' reading levels to determine differentiated student groupings and daily activities. Some differentiation is beginning to occur in math, where alternate materials are occasionally used. However, targeted instruction is not in place, particularly for the higher achieving students where this has an adverse effect on progress.

The school has made some strategic decisions about budget, personnel and programming based on available data, which mainly focus on the core areas of English language arts and math. When an analysis of the fourth grade writing scores indicated underachievement, the school hired a writing consultant to support teachers in improving instruction, and moved stronger teachers to fifth grade to close the gap. As a result, teachers are beginning to discuss differentiation in writing and are working to improve students' stamina. Other initiatives, such as a robotics club, offer additional challenge for higher achievers, but stimulation within classrooms is not sufficiently strong or consistent.

There is a climate of mutual trust and respect across the school. Relationships between students, and between teachers and students, are cordial and ensure that little disrupts learning. Leaders and staff are committed to the school and to students' progress and achievement. They work together in mutually supportive ways for the benefit of the students.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school's strategy for professional development is not yet sufficiently rigorous. The principal has developed a system to identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses and to provide them with some specialized support. The assistant principals, who meet monthly with each grade, conduct formal observations. Feedback about instructional practice is given regularly, but is usually informal. Teachers provide the principal with a personalized statement of goals, and occasionally use this to request specific professional development. In some cases, these plans align with student needs, but these plans are not revised regularly with reference to all available information. Veteran teachers willingly act as mentors for new teachers, but they are not matched according to precise need, which lessens the impact. Each grade has common preparation periods every day, allowing for ongoing communication and time for coaches to meet with grade teams, and this time is used well to enable common planning and data analysis. However, teachers do not get to visit colleagues' classrooms or other schools with regularity.

The school has begun to realize the importance of deepening teachers' understanding of data. Recent professional development has focused on improving teachers' analysis and use of data to improve instruction in literacy and math. Literacy and math coaches and the inquiry team are providing effective training and support in data analysis and several teachers have been attending workshops to gain a better understanding of how to plan for differentiated activities. The school has not yet, however, developed a systematic way to evaluate the impact of this training and support because the professional development plan lacks benchmarks to measure teachers' growth

There are many effective systems in place to support students' social and emotional development, and ensure the school is a nurturing, safe environment for students. Leaders and staff rightly feel the school is an "oasis" for students and families, and valuable programs, such as the "Baby College" to develop parenting skills, are highly attended. There are quite a number of distinctive and innovative enrichment programs and partnerships, such as the Touro College Inspire Program and College for Every Student. These programs have had a positive impact on student engagement, although

the link to classroom instruction and the impact on academic achievement related to these programs has not yet been sufficiently monitored or evaluated.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school assesses student progress in English language arts and math on a regular, basis, and the principal personally keeps track of the growth of the most struggling students. This information sometimes influences teachers' planning but it is not used generally to revise grade or whole school goals. The school's goals in English language arts and math are not broken down into short-term goals. This means that progress towards these overarching goals cannot be checked at regular intervals to determine whether students are making sufficient progress over time.

The principal and his cabinet meet weekly and use these meetings to review relevant data and discuss teachers' needs. They have made some organizational decisions, for example about the retention of personnel and the shifting of staff between grades, based on the outcomes of assessments. The school has examined its Progress Report, and school leaders and faculty are aware of the need to develop a greater repertoire of instructional strategies and practices to ensure progress for all students.

Staff members understand that the school is entering a new phase. They recognize that the academic needs of their students have shifted, and are aware that school planning does not currently reflect the higher levels at which students are beginning to achieve. The school's self-evaluation reflects, in general terms, the steps the school has taken to improve, and there is a clear understanding from staff that while the school has made strides in recent years, there is a lot more to do to ensure that students reach their potential.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: John B. Russwurm	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>				
	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?		X		
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?		X		
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?		X		
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?		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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>				
	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?		X		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?		X		
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?		X		
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X		

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?		X		
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?		X		
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?		X		
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X		

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

<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?		X		
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?		X		
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?		X		
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X		

Quality Review Scoring Key

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