

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Renaissance School of the Arts

Middle School 377

**410 East 100 Street
New York
NY 10029**

Principal: Tammy Pate Spears

Dates of review: March 1 - 2, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Luz Cortazzo

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Renaissance School of the Arts is a middle school with 134 students from grade 6 through grade 7. The school population comprises 49% Black, 47% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The school is a safe, caring, and inclusive community of learning where the strong culture of trust and respect permeates the building. Students are enthusiastic about their learning and the school's high expectations motivate and challenge them to reach beyond their best. Many parents are actively involved in the school, support its mission and goals, and believe in their school as a collaborative community. As a result, the community shares the school's high expectations for behavior, attendance, and academic achievement.

The principal's vision and determination in using data towards meeting students' needs is evident throughout the school. The school leadership team analyzes a wide array of assessment data, as well as assessing organizational practices, to design a well-focused Comprehensive Educational Plan that drives instruction and accelerates student and adult learning. The principal's strong belief in distributed leadership results in strategic use of the budget, enabling teachers to collaborate in teams several times each week. Staff continually uses a variety of data to assess student performance and progress and plan instruction. However, a small number of teachers do not consistently use the data they collect to adapt their methods of instruction or to ensure that each student has work matched to their capability. The teaching of higher order skills that is seen in literacy and math is not consistent in other content areas. Teachers review progress of targeted populations and there are clear checkpoints for whole-school goals, for administration to be certain that the school, classes and individuals are on track towards success. However, because this process is so regular and embedded within the collaborative and trusting culture of the building, the school does not always document procedures clearly enough with measurable timeframes so that findings are always available for review.

Outside organizations and school staff integrate focused collaborations throughout the school day. These strong partnerships with parents and outside organizations have a positive impact on student's social emotional and academic development. Parents and faculty share the school's high expectations. School leaders communicate these expectations via "Town Halls", assemblies, newsletters and daily personal interactions. Parents praise the principal and staff for actively involving them and giving them a voice and influence on school-wide decisions. Although the principal and the faculty engage parents in ongoing conversations about the school's curriculum, only a small number of parents have received training on the use of ARIS Parent Link and the use of this tool to deepen families' knowledge and understanding of student performance is not yet an embedded school-wide practice.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Data collected on students, effectively drive staffing, budgeting and scheduling decisions to develop and improve their learning outcomes.
 - In response to the needs of students, co-teaching classrooms have been formed. The professional development is focused this year on co-teaching strategies and teacher collaboration with the aim to enhance differentiation of instruction. Teacher assignments support student learning and promote responsible collaboration among faculty. In response to the data on learning styles, differentiated instruction and team teaching is being strengthened.
 - Good scheduling decisions reflect the goals to improve literacy and math by enabling teachers to operate efficiently with a small group of ten targeted students, resulting in students making progress.
- The rich curriculum offers opportunities for students to develop lifelong interest and growth in the Arts. The school utilizes the New York City Blueprints for the Arts as well as the State and National Standards.
 - The school's inclusive culture is evident by the active participation of parents and staff on the School Leadership Team. As a result of the team's in-depth review of school data, school leaders strategically utilize the budget to broaden inclusion of enrichment activities within the curriculum to better meet students' learning styles and academic needs. The students' raised self-esteem carries over into other content areas.
 - Students frequently participate in arts learning by studying dance, chorus, band or visual arts. Additionally, teaching artists partner with classroom teachers to support student learning on how to problem solve and study critical thinking. Through practice and performance, students are engaged in their learning, have an active voice and take responsibility for the choice of art major. Students speak proudly of their accomplishments as artists and performers, and appreciate the level of support they receive.
- School leaders and staff consistently use varied formative and summative data to track the progress of individual and targeted group of students and make adjustments as required.
 - Teams of teachers and individual teachers use data from student work products, conference notes, and skills analysis of State Assessments are utilized to identify gaps in learning and to reveal the need to teach or re-teach particular areas of the curriculum.
 - Detailed notes in assessment binders, coupled with frequent and ongoing review of student subgroup data, enable school leaders and staff to target those students performing farthest from State standards. This results in a notable increase in the proficiency level of those

students in the lowest third by making significant progress in English language arts, thus narrowing the achievement gap.

- The principal has created a learning community focused on student outcomes with a vision to continue to accelerate learning by utilizing ‘smart technology’ as part of the school’s theory of action.
 - The school’s goals and objectives are clear and align with the Comprehensive Educational Plan and which leverage growth in student outcomes. The utilization of *DyKnow* technology allows the school to automate data and affords staff the ease of assessment before, throughout and after the instructional period, to gauge what students know and are able to do. Teachers share this data to plan lessons and set learning goals.
 - The ongoing review of data from summative and formative assessments drives the development and utilization of focused school-level goals and action plans for individual and grade level students. This informs planning at all levels. Additionally school leaders conduct their own needs assessment via a school developed teacher survey and monthly conversations with parents.
- The school maintains an environment of high expectations for attendance, learning and behavior that are clearly shared with parents and students.
 - Throughout the school, there are displays of students’ work in all classrooms and hallways bulletin boards annotated with teacher feedback and corresponding rubrics, thereby encouraging school constituents to aim high and assess progress towards meeting targets. The feedback from staff encourages students to succeed while taking ownership of their own learning.
 - The principal strategically involves parents as members in decision-making. Parents feel empowered and participate in the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The launching of the Learning Leaders certification training resulting from parents’ requests, builds the shared commitment to the school’s high expectations and goals.
- Staff members are engaged in collaborative inquiry processes where ideas and best practices result in adjustments to instruction to improve learning.
 - Structured and informed professional collaboration is evident at inquiry team meetings and results in shared leadership and school-wide accountability to accelerate student progress. Staff support each other’s growth through collegial observations and critical analysis of practice is leading to the rapid development of teaching skills.
 - A core group of teacher leaders meet weekly to review data, plan, and provide learning opportunities for staff. When, teachers’ analysis revealed that some students needed additional support with reading skills, a presentation and discussion around *Effective Teaching of Inference skills* for Reading resulted in new technology to identify performance and progress.

- The school has strong partnerships with organizations that have a positive impact on students' social emotional and academic development.
 - Focused collaborations with Lincoln Center Institute, Boys and Girls Choir of Harlem, and OPUS Dance Company integrate with other school-based supports throughout the day. These meet students' needs in a cohesive manner and result in students benefiting from arts learning that contributes and supports their academic, social and emotional growth.
 - The school's social worker and staff from the integrated support center as well as Educators for Social Responsibility provide well-delivered professional development and integrate support to staff which assist socio-emotional learning and academic growth; evidenced by the low number of suspensions.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop greater consistency in evaluating and adjusting instructional practices in order to build coherence and accelerate student learning.
 - The school uses a variety of data to deliver a broad curriculum aligned to State standards but rigorous habits and higher order skills, evident in literacy and mathematics classrooms, are not yet a consistent practice across all content areas to provide sufficient extensions for higher achieving students.
- Deepen support for teachers to improve their confidence in differentiating instruction and in setting specific measurable goals for all subgroups to ensure consistent, embedded practice across the school.
 - The school's Comprehensive Educational Plan reflects current needs and informs all aspects of the school's work. Staff use this overview well during faculty and grade conferences and meetings to set specific, achievable goals. Whilst some teachers set and revise measurable targets in light of the data, this is not yet consistent in all classrooms and departments.
 - Within many lessons, appropriate differentiation meets the needs of various ability groups. However, a small number of teachers do not understand how to measure student progress or consistently use data to adapt their methods of instruction to ensure that each student has work to match their ability, leading to some underachievement.
- Strengthen strategic decisions by evaluating progress toward defined goals through formalized interim checks against measurable targets.
 - Although school leaders and faculty have structures in place to regularly evaluate and adjust instructional practices based on data they do not include sufficient formalized interim checkpoints with which to improve accuracy and coherence in measuring the progress towards goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Renaissance School of the Arts	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>				
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>				
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?				X
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				X			
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X			
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?				X			
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed