

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

The Richard Arkwright School

Elementary School 91

**68-10 Central Avenue
Glendale
NY 11385**

Principal: Victoria Catalano

Dates of review: March 24 – 25, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Richard Arkwright School is an elementary school with 870 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 43% Hispanic, 48% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008-2009 was 94%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal's vision has led the school community to maintain a supportive environment, and to have high expectations for student attendance, behavior, and a student voice in school policy. The principal has devoted a significant amount of time and effort to establishing a culture of mutual respect, and has been influential in creating a school setting that is conducive to learning during the eight months since she assumed the role as principal.

The school provides effective support in reading, particularly for special education and English language learners, who make steady progress in their achievement levels. The curriculum is broad and is designed to stimulate interest and enjoyment. Students have opportunities to participate in a variety of "hobby" classes as part of a program that allows students to choose from an array of experiences. Effective student support services and collaborations provide students with a wide range of opportunities to grow academically and socially.

Teachers collaborate to examine student work, plan together and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas and best practices, through a desire to improve student outcomes. However, teachers are not yet confident in using data to plan differentiated learning to meet the needs of all the students in their classes. The majority of lessons are organized with all students completing the same tasks and activities, meaning that some students struggle with their work while others finish quickly and become bored and restless. At this time the school does not have a clear and congruent approach to grading work to provide students with diagnostic feedback derived from carefully designed rubrics that are closely aligned to State standards. As a result, students are not clear about how precisely to improve their work.

Effective student support services and collaborations provide students with a wide range of opportunities to grow academically and socially. However, goal setting at whole-school, class and individual student level is not sufficiently developed to ensure that all students are provided with the challenges and support required for them to make consistently good progress. The lack of long- and short term goal setting means that the school is not in a position to monitor and evaluate its progress or to make timely adjustments to curriculum, instruction or professional development.

Students and parents alike spoke about the school as their "home away from home". One parent said the teachers are "wonderful", because they are "accessible and really care about the children".

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and the staff work closely as a team, to create a calm, respectful and orderly environment for learning.
 - Administrators and teachers encourage students to enjoy and engage in their learning. For example, students in grades 3, 4 and 5 participate in a club program by writing letters to the principal to request one of the five activities (art, physical education, library, music, and computers) that the school offers in cycles throughout the year. Students spoke of this option with excitement and said that teachers get to know them as actors, artists and sports enthusiasts. The students also said that these lunchtime activities help them have a better focus when they return to class.
 - The guidance counselor facilitates a student council for students in grades 4 and 5, which engages them in making school-related decisions like requesting a salad bar as a lunch option and selecting activities they would like to see during after school sessions. Every meeting has a specific student-generated agenda and is memorialized with minutes.
- Teachers collaborate to examine student work, plan together and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas, through a desire to improve student outcomes.
 - An inquiry team approach is taking place, incorporating 75% of the staff on multiple grade level teams. The team's concentration has been to develop writing strategies at each grade level. Students' formative assessment results regarding key skills are aligned with writing standards to indicate what individual supports are required. This work is beginning to show improvement in student writing across the school.
 - Grade level inquiry teams meet informally and formally to analyze the work of targeted students and to share instructional strategies that have been successful. The teams have devised action research maps that define short- and long-term learning targets, each with a SMART goal, alongside the results that have been obtained during each two-month cycle. The maps are being used to good effect on the progress of the targeted students.
- The school provides effective support in reading for special education students and English language learners who, as a result, make steady progress in their achievement levels.
 - The academic intervention team meets regularly and uses formative and summative data to identify students in need of academic assistance. Data is analyzed to promote academic growth and specific intervention strategies are systematically implemented to help set differentiated goals for students experiencing difficulties in their learning.

- A new intervention program assists special education and English language learners with technology-infused, literacy-based skills aligned with each student's individual reading level. The program helps teachers to set goals and closely assess and monitor student progress.
- The curriculum offers a wide range of experiences and choices including the arts, during and after school, to facilitate students' ownership of learning.
 - The school carefully designs the curriculum to stimulate and engage students in the learning process. Students and their parents appreciate the range of opportunities available both within and outside the school day.
 - An organizational decision was proposed, accepted by faculty and implemented school-wide by altering academic intervention systems and changing service providers' schedules so that a push-in model can provide seamless instruction for the students who are classified special education and English language learners.
- Teachers collect and analyze a range of assessments in reading and math to understand individual student performance, progress and learning needs.
 - The administration and groups of teachers review State assessments in order to assess the school's best practices and areas of need. Based on these analyses, the school has implemented initiatives to strengthen students' academic success such as DEAR (Drop Everything and Read), the 25 Book Initiative, Book of the Month and Partnership with the Glendale Public Library.
 - The principal meets with each teacher on a regular basis to discuss student progress in ELA and math that is supported by collected data. As a result of the meetings, student groupings are created, aligned with the school's instructional goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish a clear approach to grading work to provide students with diagnostic feedback, derived from carefully designed rubrics that are aligned to State standards and promote differentiation of classroom activities.
 - Classroom lessons are conducted in a whole-group forum with some semblance of grouping, but little connection is made to planning the lesson as an outgrowth of data collections. This results in a lack of purposeful differentiated instruction to meet the needs of individuals and groups.
 - Students' work is aligned to various rubrics and teachers post comments about students' work, however there is insufficient detail to explain how the work is graded and the expectations for each level. As a result, students are not able to explain how their teachers view their work and are not aware of how precisely they can improve.

- Initiate a collaborative approach in developing short- and long-term student learning goals that contain explicit next steps, are reflective of ongoing progress, and are shared with students and parents.
 - The core inquiry team is proficient in developing short and long-term student learning goals. However, across the school, there is a lack of clearly developed next steps for tracking performance, and in sharing progress results with students and their parents.
 - One of the goals for this school year is to increase parent participation and create a plan for parents to become decision makers. At present, there are too few opportunities for parents to learn more about the curriculum, or to engage in activities to provide direction for school-wide change.
- Deepen the use of a wide range of data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of organizational decisions.
 - The principal and her cabinet provide time for teacher teams to meet. However, there are no systems currently in place to monitor this work, to evaluate the success of implemented strategies or to share effective practices school-wide. This lack of monitoring and evaluation is also evident in respect of curriculum design, professional development and deployment of faculty.
- Establish a systematic approach to gathering, disseminating and analyzing data at whole-school, grade, and individual level.
 - Although data is collected regularly, the school has not yet established an accessible to all, school-wide system to enable administrators and staff to closely monitor the progress of student subgroups. Consequently patterns and trends in student performance do not always lead to timely interventions.
- Strategically plan professional development that is focused on achieving both school-wide and individual teacher goals, and can be monitored and revised as needed.
 - Although professional development opportunities are provided regularly for teachers, these tend to be generic and do not always meet the specific needs of teachers, as identified through classroom observation and data analysis. As a result, teachers are not always precisely supported to continually improve their instruction.
 - Professional development is not presently monitored to evaluate the impact on teacher growth or student achievement. In addition, not all professional development is specifically designed to meet the needs of individuals or groups. For example, although lead teachers are responsible for facilitating grade meetings, they have not had opportunities to develop their leadership capacity, resulting in variation in outcomes between grades.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Richard Arkwright School	Δ	▷	✓	+
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>	Δ	▷	✓	+
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>	Δ	▷	✓	+
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