

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**River East**

**Elementary School M037**

**508 East 120<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York  
NY 10035**

**Principal: Alison McKenzie**

**Dates of review: November 15 - 16, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Luz T.Cortazzo**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

River East is an Elementary school with 193 students from Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 51% Black, 46% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian and 1% American Indian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 92.0%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal aligns resources and makes effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
  - The principal's creative use of the budget, coupled with staff input, results in strategic use of resources that are aligned to the schools goals. Teachers receive professional development on the useful application of SMART boards during "lunch and learns". This enables them to infuse the technology into the curriculum thoughtfully. The principal is strategically planning for a city council grant to provide the school with technology upgrades and SMART boards in all classrooms to advance student learning. All classrooms have computers allowing teachers to access students' data to help ensure their instruction is meeting their needs.
  - The principal ensures that teachers have multiple opportunities to meet regularly to analyze student work and identify instructional strategies to raise student achievement. Literacy and math consultants work with the faculty on analyzing current data with an eye towards the common- core standards, to best support student needs and accelerate student learning. Additionally, teachers employ inquiry techniques by collaboratively using low inference transcripts to promote shared leadership and responsibility, focused on improving student learning.
- The school provides a safe, nurturing environment that encourages high expectations and coordinates supports to impact positively on students' personal and academic development.
  - Parents and students generously admit that the school is a safe place where students' social-emotional and academic needs are promptly addressed. The frequent review and effective use of information relative to referral, attendance and suspension rates resulted in a decrease in principal and superintendent suspensions as well as an increase in student attendance. This has enabled students to focus on their academic growth.
  - Students speak proudly of their school pride and unity. The school uses a tugboat metaphor to cultivate a positive school culture and encourage school spirit while deepening the students' understanding of their motto, "We are part of something much greater than ourselves". During Town Meeting, students feel empowered to share their thoughts and experiences with the school community, resulting in students' positive attitudes towards learning.
- School leaders and staff use and develop tools to aggregate and organize data so that trends in student performance are accessible and useful for making decisions.
  - Team of teachers and individual teachers have developed tools such as Google documents, and jump drives which enable them to aggregate and

organize data so that information about trends in student performance is accessible and useful for making instructional decisions as evidenced at the vertical inquiry team meeting targeting the English language learners subgroup. The information provided by these multiple levels of information sources has allowed teachers to revise and redefine the writing assessments and rubrics to provide each grade level and class with greater continuity and consistency across the school regarding grade level writing expectations and vocabulary providing uniformity for the entire school.

- The school enhances already strong relationships with parents by sharing high expectations and maintaining a high quality of communication about the achievement and progress of their children.
  - The school consistently shares relevant information with parents and students to encourage good attendance and academic achievement with a focus on future college readiness. The school's newsletters, calendars, school messenger, and individual conferences with parents and students support the mutual exchange of information. These resources provide parents with a steady stream of information, resulting in clear expectations regarding student performance and impacting increased academic growth. Interactive parent workshops relating to the use of ARIS Parent Link, Acuity data and test sophistication strategies help parents better understand students' performance. These meetings allow parents to keep abreast of their children's academic strengths and enable them to participate in the planning of and support for next learning steps, thereby solidifying the home-school connection.
- The school administration promotes professional collaboration through teacher teams to analyze student work, resulting in adjustments to classroom practices to improve student outcomes.
  - A sizable majority of teachers participate on teacher teams using an inquiry approach. Two hours of weekly common planning allow grade level teams the opportunity to meet regularly to study, analyze and identify trends and patterns in student work, as well as revise classroom practices to improve learning outcomes. This result in students analyzing information, and making connections across content and texts, as evidenced by positive outcomes in student grade level writing and teachers understanding of vocabulary instruction of Tier I and Tier 2 words.
  - The data specialist and lead teachers facilitate teacher teams as they are empowered to be the key decision makers regarding actions that affect student learning. As a result of their leadership, a monthly inquiry breakfast was established for teachers to share best practices building on last year's work including conducting writing case studies to look closely at student writing, with a specific focus on English language learners.
- Teaching practices align to the curriculum and teachers' use of strategies and classroom routines enable students to produce meaningful work products.

- Across classrooms, it is evident that teachers have a good understanding of the school's belief that students need modeling, independent practice, and collaborative engagement. Differentiation is also evident in inclusionary practices such as: a multi-sensory teaching, visual and kinesthetic supports, explicit instruction with a clear and succinct lesson objectives and teaching points that included skills and strategies, and a constructivist or problem solving approach to teaching and learning resulting in student progress on various levels of classroom assessments.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Ensure the use of measurable and differentiated learning goals to accelerate student progress, monitored through regular, formal checks against measurable targets.
  - Teachers analyze data to identify which students require additional support but it is not always evident that students are progressing according to plan. Not all teachers set measurable and specific interim learning goals for struggling learners, monitor progress and make timely adjustments. Students routinely state their current reading level, the current topic of the class lesson and passing the State tests as their interim and long-term goals, rather than goals specific to content and skills at the classroom level.
- Establish a systematic approach to the gathering, analysis, dissemination and use of a common assessment and extend the analysis to examine patterns and trends of all relevant subgroups in order to take timely action.
  - School leaders use a range of data to evaluate progress towards plans and goals. Teacher teams and individual teachers use data at the classroom level to track progress of relevant subgroups. However, the school has not yet standardized a common assessment to set and track ambitious goals; this leads to some inconsistency in the adjustment of goals and plans from common assessment data.
- Refine action planning by developing interim goals and benchmarks for all plans to enable the principal and staff to modify goals and objectives in a timely manner in order to optimize the impact of actions and to celebrate successes along the way.
  - Currently, there is no transparent system for administration to measure and evaluate student progress toward interim goals, or to identify areas where improvements in plans are needed. This is hindering the school's ability to identify specific areas where adjustments and improvement to curriculum and instructional strategies are essential to increase student achievement, and to monitor this in a timely fashion.
- Expand the use of data analysis to regularly evaluate and revise processes and programs within the school that lead to effective professional collaborations.
  - Although inquiry teams set appropriate goals and track student progress, school leaders have not instituted systems across all teams that continually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the teachers' collaborations. Administration does not regularly monitor whether or not the goals have been met. There is no structure in place to ensure next steps around team goals.

<b>School Quality Criteria 2010-2011</b>				
<b>School name: River East</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?				<b>X</b>
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	

<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?		<b>X</b>		
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				<b>X</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	

**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.**

*To what extent does the school...*

	UD	D	P	WD
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		

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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