



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Division of Performance and Accountability
2010-2011**

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

The Renaissance Leadership Academy

Middle School 322

**4600 Broadway
Manhattan
NY 10040**

Principal: Erica Zigelman

Dates of review: March 22 - 23, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Martha Madera

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Renaissance Leadership Academy is a middle school with 490 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 5% Black, 94% Hispanic, 1% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 39% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. 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 and her cabinet have maximized their use of resources by making strategic decisions designed to achieve school goals.
 - The principal has strategically used resources to establish a strong team that is supported by content area experts and outside consultants. Two on-site coaches, a bilingual specialist and a data manager coordinate their efforts and meet with teachers on a regular basis to analyze data, reflect on classroom practices and make necessary adjustments that ensure students' academic growth. Strategic planning to meet the needs of English language learners led to the establishment of the school's "ELLs Project". Using block scheduling, students are provided with small group instruction that focus on their language modality. The project promotes collaboration amongst the faculty, as native language arts, literacy, and ESL teachers hold themselves accountable for the progress of their students. This has resulted in noticeable gains with this sub-group in the school's literacy quarterly exams.
- The school maintains a safe and orderly environment that is conducive to student and adult learning.
 - Academic deans work with administration to develop a school plan that is data driven and founded on the adopted Positive Behavior Incentive System. Topics such as bullying and conflict resolution are addressed and staff is provided with tools that support them with promoting a respectful school environment. After school programs offer enrichment activities that include community service, sports and the arts, all contributing to student's academic and social-emotional learning.
 - Students are well known by staff that support their academic and social growth, and as such provide them with opportunities to explore social issues that have a direct impact on their personal development. An example of this was the Symposium on Women's Oppression, in which eighth grade students were provided with opportunities to explore their own bias, thus contributing to their social-emotional learning.
- The principal uses observations of classroom teaching to elevate school wide instructional practices that support student learning.
 - Teachers are supported by coaches who help them develop their pedagogical skills. In addition, they attend off site professional development in their content areas that is in accordance with the school's instructional focus. Observations and classroom visitation are conducted and staff is provided with classroom snapshot reports that provide feedback and next steps for support. To address the diverse level of expertise amongst pedagogical staff, individual growth plans are established to meet teachers' individual needs. Experienced teachers videotape their lessons and analyze them with colleagues to gain deeper insights as to how they can improve their practices. New teacher and their

mentors use the videos as a tool to help them develop their pedagogical skills in order to deliver effective instruction that support student learning.

- The principal has a clear vision for school improvement evidenced by data based goal setting and strategic planning to improve student learning.
 - Analysis of data drive interim and long-term goal setting at the school. The School Comprehensive Plan outlines goals that have evolved over time to meet new state targets in literacy and math. This year the school has revised its curriculum to incorporate the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for writing, thereby supporting the development of student writing skills across the school. Strong structures facilitate communication and the involvement of all stakeholders. The School Leadership Team, faculty conferences and teacher team meetings all serve as forums to generate support for the school's direction. Teachers attest that the school's "ELL's Project" for English language learners, is the result of teachers coming together to address the needs of this student sub-group in order to ensure their academic success.
- The school has high expectations for learning and provides opportunities to families that enable them to be involved in school-wide decision making.
 - Accelerated classes are offered providing opportunities for students to partake in course works that stretch their academic potential. Students' accomplishments are recognized throughout the year and culminate with the school's Honors Breakfast Ceremony, where students are recognized for academic performances and exemplary citizenship.
 - Parents take an active role in promoting the school's instructional agenda through their participation in the parent association and the School Leadership Team. Parents attest that they have a voice in which instructional programs are adopted and provide input on how the budget is spent. By engaging parents in a range of activities, the school encourages them to be a part of their child's academic success.
- The school gathers and analyzes a wide range of assessment data in order to identify trends, strength, and areas for improvement.
 - The principal and academic deans frequently review attendance, referral and discipline data and create intervention strategies that have resulted in increased student attendance and a decrease in suspensions. In addition, the effective evaluation of performance data, both summative and formative creates a clear portrait of the school's strengths and areas of needs. Further analysis is conducted in order to identify relevant subgroup performance, progress and learning needs. Consequently, there is a greater emphasis on addressing the needs of English language learners in order to support a more focused instructional initiative for this subgroup. The latest quarterly data reports and the assessment of student work reflect an increase in student achievements.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance tasks that emphasize rigorous habits, higher order skills, and include questioning that extends thinking to maximize students' learning.
 - As a result of the school's participation in the Common Core State Standards pilot, curriculum maps have been aligned to the standards and include a focus on college readiness tasks. However, classroom visits indicate that further support is needed to embed higher order thinking skills across all content areas so that students' learning is maximized.
 - Academic tasks are planned to meet the needs of all learners, as is evident during instruction for English language learners and special education students. However, the review of student work to plan lessons that further develop analytical and evaluative thought processes of higher achieving students are not yet embedded across grades, thus limiting some students' learning potential.
- Ensure that lessons are differentiated across the content areas to meet the needs of all subgroups in order to accelerate student performance.
 - Using the workshop model teachers provide whole class instruction, as well as work with students in small groups and in partnerships, in order to provide extra support. While lessons across classrooms are typically differentiated and students demonstrate a general level of engagement and thinking, discussions during teacher teams meeting do not focus on developing differentiated strategies that can be shared across grades and content areas, thus limiting opportunities for teachers to maximize their learning and that of their students.
- Refine the structure for teacher team meetings to critically analyze student work in order to adjust instructional decisions to improve learning outcomes.
 - Teachers meet to plan instruction, monitor student progress and make needed adjustments to curriculum in order to improve learning. However, teachers meet in multi-grade teams, thus limiting a focus approach to addressing the specific instructional needs of individual grades.
 - Coaches lead team meetings and regularly provide teachers with opportunities to develop their skills as facilitator. However, shared leadership is not yet embedded across all teams so that all teachers play an integral role in decisions that affect their students' learning, thus limiting their personal growth and that of their students.
- Expand the process to critically analyze information on student learning in order to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level.
 - Teacher teams use assessments that are aligned to the key standards and analyze results to evaluate student progress and adjust planning. However, an analysis of student work is not yet used and as a result, a clear portrait of students' mastery is not established. In addition, while teachers supplement formative assessment by examining Periodic Assessment data, there are few examples of teachers designing common assessments that capture specific information about students' understanding, thereby hindering opportunities for students to achieve their highest performance levels.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: The Renaissance Leadership Academy	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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			
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
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>	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							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed