

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Ryder Elementary School

Elementary School K114

**1077 Remsen Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Darwin Smith

Dates of review: May 30 - 31, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Ryder Elementary School/P.S. 114 is an elementary school with 751 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 85% Black, 10% Hispanic, 4% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has a set of data-based priority goals, which fuel curriculum, practice and programs, leveraging opportunities for accelerated student learning and social-emotional growth. (3.1)
 - The school leaders have established a short list of data-based goals aimed at improving curriculum and teacher practice with a focus on strengthening student learning. The goals are explicit in the Comprehensive Educational Plan as well as the Principal Performance Review and guide school improvement efforts. Hence, teachers across grades adapt and implement units of study in literacy and math aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Accordingly, they design student performance tasks requiring students to read texts of greater complexity, fostering critical thinking skills and abstract reasoning needed to explain and justify their mathematical thinking. There is a particular focus on students who made the least amount of progress or failed to achieve proficiency levels on State exams. Consequently, interim school planning results in students performing at higher levels of academic and social proficiency as evidenced in monthly formative assessments and fewer classroom occurrences.
 - Alongside administrators and teachers, parents contribute to school-level planning and express full support for the school's revitalized mission of excellence. Thus, parents on the School Leadership Team have a working understanding of teacher effectiveness goals and the need to hasten student achievement in order to meet the demands of CCLS. Therefore, learning objectives posted throughout corridors entice full community support for the redirection of the school.
- The principal and staff demonstrate unwavering commitment to the implementation of new structures that support the school's focus on establishing a nurturing climate and productive academic culture. (1.4)
 - The school is currently experiencing a renaissance of positive school climate. The new principal has reinvigorated the school's commitment to a student-centered environment, enabling the school community to centralize supports for students through efforts such as Project Read and Project Math, Success Academy, Art Appreciation, Ryder Girls Club and the Second Grade Swim Program, which have constructive effects on students' personal and academic lives. In response to careful analysis of past School Surveys and Online Occurrence Reports, the school has become a "community where there are no doors". As such, all members have direct access to the principal and to each other and are encouraged to bring points of interest and concerns to the forefront. Thus, students, staff, and administrators engage in peer mediation sessions, develop social contracts, and implement the Mutt-i-grees Program, a character development curriculum, which reinforces a secure and thriving climate. As a result, there is a 7% monthly increase in average student attendance up from 91% to 98%.

- The principal facilitates daily morning meetings with students that generate a vibrant school spirit. During these forums, students are able to voice their ideas and speak about their concerns. Student participation in decision-making has led to a large Penny Harvest donation to children in Tanzania for gymnasium equipment, the purchase of desired items for the school store and white shirts and blouses for Student Council members to distinguish them from other students. Students speak with pride about their school, describing how teachers and the principal help them personally and academically. In addition, they echo claims that the school has changed for the better, everybody has started to work hard, and teachers are now happy when they return to class after meetings.
- The principal's fiscal prudence results in insightful strategic organizational and instructional decisions, which foster collaborations that bolster student learning. (1.3)
 - The effective use of school's resources support academic goals and students' learning needs. Thus, a consultant hired to align the school budget with priority goals results in the deliberate use of funds to decrease teacher-to-student ratio and increase teacher-to-teacher collaborations. In addition, an F-status teacher supports achievement by working with teachers of students with disabilities and English language learners in order to deepen pedagogical understanding of instructional strategies that help students succeed. Accordingly, additional support for students performing below standard in literacy also leads to implementation of the newly purchased Achieve 3000 adaptive computer program as well as targeted small group instruction. In turn, the principal reports students' levels of proficiency have increased, as evidenced by their performance on fall versus spring diagnostic assessments.
 - The utilization of the departmentalized model of programming, as seen in middle and high schools, strengthens the teaching of core subjects, enabling select teachers to work in tandem to deliver instruction in two subject areas: either literacy and social studies or math and science. This grouping of teachers and students result in multiple opportunities for weekly teacher meetings, supervised analysis of data and regular co-planning across classrooms. Consequently, accountability for student learning galvanizes teachers in support of their peers and spurs discussions about which students have demonstrated learning and acknowledgement of those who have not. This furthers professional support provided by the Aussie consultant, UFT Teacher Center and network instructional specialists.
- School leaders and staff analyze a comprehensive array of student data, including subgroup performance, leading to successful identification of strengths and needs positively impacting student learning outcomes. (2.1)
 - The school leaders and faculty identify sub-group needs and school-wide trends by analyzing an extensive amount of data in order to understand the strengths and challenges of the school. This includes State assessments, New York City Progress Reports, NyStart, School Survey, Achieve 3000, Online Occurrence Reporting System data, referrals to special education, teacher assessments, predictives, and longitudinal data to determine whole school tendencies and to create appropriate

goals. For example, evaluation of periodic data indicated the need to bolster the performance of students lagging in literacy and math, particularly English language learners and students with disabilities. Therefore, to ensure these subgroups make adequate yearly progress, daily monitoring of classroom instruction results in experienced teachers, familiar with the needs of these targeted subgroups, providing in class interventions such as small group and individualized instruction. As a result, in the past year students have produced higher quality expository writing and made overall gains in formative math assessments.

- Teachers use skills data from periodic assessments to target areas of deficiency in learning, which leads to adjustments to classroom practice in order to meet the diverse needs among learners. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams, supported by consultants and coaches, create and revise teacher-made common and benchmark assessments in order to better align with instructional foci and the school's evolving shifts in curriculum. Their analysis of student progress and performance assessments provides the basis for flexible grouping and differentiated tasks. In addition, through team meetings, they evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching. Thus, teachers modify performance tasks in order to focus more on content, materials, and skills, thereby improving the delivery of lessons toward meeting the needs of all students.
 - Teachers use periodic data to supplement students' State performance data. Analysis of periodic and teacher-made tests reveal reading comprehension and structured writing as target areas of need for all subgroups. Hence, teacher examination of class level data leads to strategy groups in tiers, resulting in a more cohesive provision of academic services such as extended day and academic intervention programs. As a result, the majority of writing samples on display, pre-kindergarten through grade 5, meets or exceeds grade level expectations.
- The school evaluates its assessment procedures and makes necessary improvements that increase coherence of policies and practice. (5.2)
 - Extensive weekly cabinet meetings result in the study and examination of which assessment data offers the most useful information in identifying next steps for the school. The protocol of teachers compiling data in binders coupled with the work of an external data specialist supports the focused work of teacher teams in addressing all aspects of teaching and learning, including the challenges of implementing the CCLS. As a result, adjustments to teacher tools foster cohesive practice such as grade level skills of the week.
 - Presently, school-wide data posted throughout the school is the systemic approach for keeping everyone on the same page. An open system of sharing performance data with students and families results in monthly awards assemblies focused on academics, attendance, behavior and effort, which keep families abreast of children's progress. Therefore, accessibility of information empowers cohesive practice and articulated understanding of school-wide policies and practices.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue the development of curriculum maps aligned with CCLS to further promote rigorous habits and higher order skills as they move students toward postsecondary readiness. (1.1)
 - The school uses State standards consistently to create and modify pacing calendars and curriculum maps, and all teachers have been actively involved in redesigning instructional units to meet the demands of the CCLS. Accordingly, on a weekly basis, teams utilize rubrics to examine student work products and identify next steps in order to ensure that learners are on the path for meeting the demands of State standards. Nevertheless, the emphasis on rigorous habits and higher order skills do not reflect a deep pedagogical understanding of appropriate shifts for students with disabilities, English language learners and high performing students. As such, it is not helping the school to close the achievement gap or help students prepare for secondary and postsecondary success.
- Strengthen teacher-questioning techniques in order to stimulate rich discussion, increase active student participation and offer appropriate challenge at all ability levels. (1.2)
 - In keeping with the school's belief of how students learn best, students engage in partner work, small group instruction and independent practice. However, teaching routines and question prompts are not effectively and strategically differentiated to extend student learning. For example, observation of classrooms depicted students on each grade participating in lessons aligned to curriculum and students completing a variety of tasks. However, teacher-questioning techniques result in learning experiences that lead to general levels of student thinking and engagement, which hinders hastened achievement.
- Deepen authentic feedback to students and families so that they understand how to develop areas for growth and support strengths, thereby enabling precise next steps toward attainment of individual and grade-level goals. (3.3)
 - The use of periodic assessments and reflective rubrics to evaluate student work and note performance levels are evident across classrooms. Students report that teachers change their goals and they fluently articulate what they are working on, but students currently have little understanding of how to improve their performance. This lack of ownership for learning hampers academic progress.
 - Although student performance is shared via progress reports twice per year, parents report many comments are vague and do not reflect how they can help with next learning goals. The lack of actionable steps limits parents' understanding of suitable support to improve their children's performance.
- Ensure on-going short, frequent cycles of formative feedback result in recorded professional expectations in order to promote continuous professional reflection and support improved instructional practices. (4.1)
 - Despite, the principal's clearly defined professional protocols such as formal observations, intervisitations, targeted support from coaches and

consultants for developing teachers, dedicated time for inquiry and facilitation of professional discourse as well as an alternative observation model for tenured teachers, there is no indication that ongoing short frequent cycles of feedback resulting in reciprocal communication is firmly in place. The absence of common knowledge among teachers of a research based framework for teacher effectiveness with specifically targeted next steps and a clear timeline for follow-up thwarts professional capacity building and therefore impedes student achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Ryder Elementary School	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?			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