

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Rafael Hernandez

**Elementary School M030
144-176 East 128th Street
New York
NY 10035**

Principal: Teri Stinson

Dates of review: May 15 - 16, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Rafael Hernandez is an elementary school with 302 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 52% Black, 43% Hispanic, 4% White and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school provides a safe, caring environment where adults know individual students well and coordinate supports to positively impact students' academic and social growth. (1.4)
 - Students and parents appreciate that they can turn to teachers and guidance counselors to help resolve personal issues that interfere with learning. Academic achievements are rewarded during school assemblies and on hallway bulletin boards. Family night celebrations also acknowledge literacy achievements. After a review of the School Survey and incident reports revealed safety concerns, school leaders proactively assigned guidance counselors to push in to classrooms to support teachers and help monitor students' behavior. During monthly meetings the school's active attendance committee team members review data, note trends and identify needed interventions to address chronic lateness and absenteeism. Outreach efforts, including phone calls and frequent home visits by support staff, are yielding good improvements. These efforts result in a notable increase in attendance rates, a reduction in student lateness and increased academic gains for targeted students as noted on tracking logs.
 - A teacher coordinates the peer mediators who learn specific strategies to help reduce conflict. During student meetings students indicate that such leadership activities help bolster their self esteem, that they know who to turn to when they are sad, scared or angry and that adults throughout the school respond to their needs. Parent volunteers provide additional tutoring support in the classrooms, as well as help supervise in the lunchrooms and chaperone class trips. Additionally, the school's small class sizes enable every student to be well known by school faculty who help support their academic growth with small group intervention strategies. This level of differentiation allows students to improve specific skills and increase their academic performance, as evidenced by hallway and classroom displays of student work products that demonstrate critical thinking and problem solving in literacy and math.
- The school sustains an outstanding range of partnerships with community organizations that have a positive impact on students' social, emotional and academic development. (4.4)
 - Regular assemblies, certificates, hallway bulletin boards and daily morning announcements celebrate students' academic and social achievements. Guidance counselors frequently provide professional development on topics such as assertive discipline, child abuse and suicide prevention. As such, teachers are well prepared to utilize strategies that meet the needs of these students, resulting in the reduction of guidance referrals and the reduction of the referral rate to citywide children's services.
 - School leaders frequently review attendance, guidance and referral reports to note trends and areas of need. This data analysis informs plans for added supports from Graham Windham, a community based partnership that provides intervention and intensive family support services in mental

health and academics. This partnership's contributions integrate well with school-based guidance services to meet the needs of targeted students and their families. The school's outstanding collaborations with Harlem Hospital, Continental Society and the Salvation Army also serve to provide both academic and social-emotional support to students identified as having needs. First grade students who receive violin lessons from Opus 118 are excited about their enriched arts experiences. School leaders recognize that students need these real world learning experiences in order to help students build strong content knowledge and understand other perspectives and cultures. Consequently, expanded arts experiences create increased levels of student engagement, bolstering students' self-esteem and their love of school as evidenced by classroom visits and conversations with students.

- School leaders communicate high expectations to all in order to promote adult learning and prepare students for middle school and beyond. (3.4)
 - School staff welcome the training provided by their peers during the school day and weekend workshops. During monthly faculty conferences and professional development sessions, the administrative team stresses the infusion of school-wide themes in the curricula and insists that teachers place a high emphasis on planning. Teachers serve as critical friends to each other and are given time so that they can visit each other's classrooms and provide feedback using a critical friend protocol. A school-developed template captures feedback that is shared with administrators. The continuous and transparent cycle of support creates high levels of individual and team accountability leading to improved teaching practices and student learning as noted in student writing products where students explain their thinking and solutions to specific math prompts.
 - Perfect attendance assemblies, family literacy and math nights, academic awards and individual letters of recognition are but a small sample of the myriad of ways high expectations are communicated to families and students. The guidance counselor facilitates workshops on the middle school application and articulation process. Additionally, school staff coordinate an annual career day where fifth graders interact with personnel across a broad spectrum of careers. These activities result in middle school visits and a heightened awareness of careers to which students may not have been previously exposed. As such, parents report during the parent meeting that their children have increased aspirations for college.
- Assessment practices help analyze student performance and identify progress so that instructional supports are determined that improve student outcomes. (2.2)
 - In addition to using common rubrics, grade level and department teams also create common assessments which are used to identify strengths and needs, as well as promote ongoing conversation and reflection. Acuity assessments and mock exams are scored and analyzed utilizing State standards. Teachers are then asked to reflect on the data. This leads to a revision of specific areas in the curricula which align with State indicators in literacy and math with an emphasis on critical analysis and mathematical thinking. Consequently, teachers identified gaps when students wrote expanded responses to testing prompts and re-taught particular aspects of the curriculum highlighting the use of specific strategies to solidify learning.

- Teacher teams organize and review assorted streams of data including student work products, running records, predictive assessments, item skills analysis and benchmark exams in math and English language arts. Teachers develop intervention plans for individual and groups of students that are frequently reassessed to note gains and all classroom-based teachers assemble data binders to track the progress of specific students and students in the lowest third, resulting in targeted supplemental support and small group tutoring. This strategic support leads to achievement gains for these students as noted on formative assessment tracking logs.
- Professional collaboration is a high priority and faculty benefit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths. (4.1)
 - Daily informal walkthroughs and planned formal observations by school leaders provide teachers with timely verbal and written feedback. Assistant principals facilitate biweekly Friday feedback meetings with teachers. Lead teachers mentor new colleagues and the schedule allows for them to meet three times weekly. As a result, several newly-assigned teachers exhibit understanding of grade appropriate strategies that elicit basic student understanding. Additionally, after identifying pedagogic trends, administrators provide targeted demonstration lessons and intervisitations and plan for future supports facilitated by coaches and assistant principals. This prompts teachers to refine their pedagogy and fosters teacher growth.
- School leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions that support improvements in learning. (1.3)
 - The principal's budgeting, coupled with staff input, result in the strategic use of resources that are aligned to the school's four instructional goals: increased performance in reading, writing and math as well as refining school-wide practices for giving and receiving feedback. All students have access to foreign language instruction in Latin and Spanish. Literacy and math specialists collaborate with and coach individuals and teams of teachers who share responsibility for targeted groups of students. The technology lab as well as iPads purchased for specific classes support technology integration and enable students to publish their work. The school librarian augments grade level teaming across grades three to five with a focus on nonfiction texts. Consequently, comparisons with baseline data reveal progress in students' independent reading levels and, thus, increased levels of comprehension. A hiring committee supports school leaders and ensures that selected staff's practices are well aligned to the school's goals. After a review of data revealed noted declines on State assessments, the principal devised a departmentalized structure for fourth and fifth grades. As such, teachers on these grade levels teach classes based on their strength in either English language arts or math and cluster teachers push in to provide added. As evidenced in tracking logs of English language arts and math benchmark assessments, the decrease in the student to teacher ratio supports students' academic development, increases the shared level of accountability to accelerate student growth and is conducive to optimal levels of personal success.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop teaching strategies to support practices that encourage and demonstrate deep thinking so that all students are fully engaged in their learning. (1.2)
 - Although teachers model skills and ask general questions to encourage student-to-student collaboration, questioning strategies do not effectively provoke deep levels of student thinking, and this limits all students' ability to engage in classroom tasks and discussions. The workshop methodology with mini lesson, modeling and independent practice is used across classrooms. However, not all lessons are equally rigorous so that all students are not engaged in higher order thinking. Additionally, extension activities that stretch the thinking of higher achieving students are not yet the norm across grades and subjects. This limits these students from being further challenged to perform at their highest ability levels.

- Further refine curricula in order to consistently emphasize rigorous tasks so that higher order thinking skills and strategies engage all learners. (1.1)
 - Core staff members deliberately adjust the curriculum in order to integrate Common Core Learning Standards into English language arts and math units of study. However, students are not engaged in the types of projects and tasks that apply knowledge and so their retention of content information is not solidified. Moreover, performance-based tasks that probe for deep understanding and application of learning do not consistently extend across all content areas or grade levels so that all students, especially English language learners and students with disabilities, are suitably challenged, are able to make personal connections to themselves and the world and are able to transfer their learning to new contexts.

- Develop greater consistency in evaluating and adjusting instructional practices in order to build coherence and accelerate student learning (5.1)
 - School leaders and faculty plan and develop curricula in the summer and at the beginning of the school year. They are at the beginning stages of establishing specific timeframes to evaluate and further align curricula, instructional units and practices across all content in response to student needs. Consequently, real world connections, higher order skills generating testable hypotheses and sustained conversations that give students the chance to support their views with evidence, change their minds and use questions as a way to learn more, are not yet the norm.

- Expand the use of data analysis to guide the school in evaluating the effectiveness of teacher teamwork so that distributive leadership adjustments are made in a timely manner to further support teacher collaboration. (5.4)
 - School supervisors personally participate in teacher team meetings so that they are better positioned to support the work. Teams are facilitated by grade and/or department leaders and the principal provides other informal opportunities for teacher leadership development. Although inquiry teams discuss student progress, school leaders have not yet instituted coherent and aligned systems across all teams to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the teachers' collaborations. Additionally, school leaders are now considering formal ways of sharing team findings school wide. Consequently, the benefits and impact of this work are not yet at optimal levels so that pedagogic growth is further accelerated.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Rafael Hernandez	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