

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

John B. Russwurm

Elementary School

**2230 Fifth Avenue
New York
NY 10037**

Principal: Natasha Spann

Dates of review: April 23 - 24, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John B Russwurm is an elementary school with 346 students from prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 64% Black, 27% Hispanic, 2% White, 1% Asian students and 6% other students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.1 %.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has strong internal and external supports that provide students with opportunities to participate in activities and programs that have a positive impact on their social, emotional and academic development. (4.4)
 - The school's guidance counselor and social worker meet with selected students on an ongoing basis to provide counseling services. Harlem Children's Zone Baby College supports the early years' program by providing health care parenting skills and child rearing resources to families. College for Every Student (CFES) affords students the opportunity to participate in a college readiness program where students visit colleges and receive information and strategies to help them prepare for and transition to middle school and beyond. As such, there is a high level of excitement and parents report that student' academic aspirations are supported, which bolsters their self esteem.
 - School leaders review suspension reports and student referral data on an ongoing basis in order to ensure a safe environment and make adaptations to meet students' needs. Discussions at cabinet meetings include the review of noted trends as well as a review of partnerships in order to ensure that services align with the school's goals and address the needs of targeted students. As such, focused collaborations with Harlem Junior Tennis, Play Skool, Harlem Council of Elders and Carmel Hill Foundation integrate well with school-based guidance services to meet the needs of students and their families. Students' involvement with Touro College's Scrubs Club and the Wellness in School program provides hands-on exploratory experiences in cooking and healthy menu planning. Special focus is paid to students in temporary housing and other students requiring supports, resulting not only in the reduction of guidance referrals, but also a lower referral rate to citywide agencies this school year.
- Through regular use of a wide range of relevant data, school leaders have an understanding of the performance of individuals by group and subject, which informs intervention strategies. (2.1)
 - The principal reviews state assessment data, progress and quality review reports, as well as Acuity and other streams of formative assessment data. The analysis of suspension and attendance data has led to daily phone calls, individual parent meetings and home visits as needed. These strategies result in the increased monthly student attendance rate and decreased the number of superintendent suspensions. Noted decline in writing achievement levels resulted in a revised and restructured writing curriculum. Concern over the performance of the lowest and highest achieving grades three to five students served as the rationale for the creation of a response to intervention team, specifically targeting levels one and two students during Saturday Academy. There is also a Saturday enrichment program focused on the needs of higher achieving students. Strategic efforts such as these result in instruction that is increasing student outcomes as noted on tracking logs.

- School staff maintain a safe environment and coordinate supports to impact positively on students' personal and academic development. (1.4)
 - There is a sense of calm throughout the entire school. During monthly attendance meetings, team members review data, note trends and identify needed interventions to address chronic lateness and absenteeism, such as frequent home visits by support staff. Monthly attendance rewards and other targeted efforts result in an increase in monthly attendance rates and a reduction in the number of tardy students. Additionally, a review of the School Survey revealed noted concerns with bullying. To address these concerns, the Greater Links of Harlem now work with grades three to five students and help support their social-emotional needs through role-play and student performances. Consequently, there is a noted decline in the superintendent suspension rate. As such, varying emotional needs are addressed in a highly differentiated manner, enabling students to focus more on their learning in support of academic growth.
 - Students who edit and publish the school newspaper indicate that their overall writing skills have improved. Select students from grades three to five serve as mentors and provide advice and feedback to the principal on school policies. Their input led to a student campaign selling healthy snacks to raise funds to support college tours. Such active participation in shaping school-wide decisions helps to bolster students' self-esteem and supports the development of their leadership skills.

- School leaders communicate high expectations to students and staff in order to prepare students for middle school and beyond and to promote adult learning. (3.4)
 - The administrative team, through faculty conferences and weekly cabinet and planning meetings, consistently communicates a high instructional focus. A daily electronic morning message to staff is generally focused on the Principles of Learning. Staff welcome the training provided by network personnel. Teacher leaders, consisting of one teacher from each grade, prepare and share team meeting minutes and agendas with the administrative team. The continuous and transparent cycle of support is raising the level of individual and team accountability and some teachers are exhibiting improved teaching practices.
 - The principal has bi-monthly Coffee Chats with parents and school leaders attend Parent Association meetings. Opportunities are provided to parents to learn about curriculum and instruction such as the Family Literacy Night and Parents as Art Partners workshops. Specific activities, via a grant written by a former parent leader, serve to provide students with strategies to help them transition to middle school. As stated in parent and student meetings, students have increased aspirations for the next level and beyond.

- The principal establishes and regularly evaluates leadership opportunities for staff in order to cultivate the development of teacher leaders. (5.4)
 - At monthly teacher leader cabinet meetings, stakeholders monitor student progress and make recommendations to the principal for how to effectively mentor and coach individual teachers in order to further support their

pedagogical needs. A school-developed template is used to track the work and progress of teacher teams. As a result, as noted at the early childhood team meeting, the skills of some teams are progressing, which directly impacts on increased student achievement.

- Teachers develop professional development goals aligned to the school's goals. Goals are reviewed during discussions held twice during the school year. The principal hosts retreats in order to evaluate the impact of leadership opportunities available to staff, foster collaboration and develop staff morale. These risk free conversations empower teachers and, as a result, they frequently volunteer to chair committees and assume other leadership roles.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve and strengthen lesson planning so that teaching practices provide differentiated opportunities and student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and engagement. (1.2)
 - Some teachers prepare lessons that target the specific needs and strengths of students and employ differentiated strategies that address a wide range of student ability levels. However, this is not the standard practice in most classrooms. Therefore, not all students receive the academic support necessary to accelerate their learning. Additionally, data-driven flexible grouping for instruction is evident in some classrooms. However, not all teachers plan lessons that demonstrate sufficient engagement in higher order thinking so that students see the activity as personally meaningful and their level of interest is sufficiently high that they persist in the face of difficulty. As such, meaningful work products do not yet consistently demonstrate extension activities that stretch the thinking of all students including those that are higher achieving.
- Further refine the curriculum in order to consistently emphasize rigorous tasks so that higher order thinking skills and strategies cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
 - The curricula has become more aligned to state standards and core staff members make deliberate adjustments in order to integrate Common Core Learning Standards tasks into English language arts and math units of study. However, students are not consistently 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, including those 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.
- Extend the development of a cohesive system to ensure that, on an ongoing basis, all teachers know their individual students' strengths and needs across the curriculum to foster targeted instruction and task engagement. (2.2)
 - Individual and teams of teachers review students work products, end-of-unit assessments as well as summative state assessment data to note the strengths and next steps for subgroups of students. However, the utilization of rubrics to provide quality feedback to students is not a

consistent practice across classrooms. As such, teachers are not communicating the next steps and students are not fully aware of what skills they need to master in order to reach their goals.

- Teachers do not consistently reflect deeply on the impact that their selected strategies, resources and teacher practices have on student achievement. Additionally, most students are not utilizing rubrics or other tools to self-assess their work and teachers are not yet modeling think aloud metacognitive strategies that foster student reflection. Consequently, many teachers are not swiftly making instructional adjustments based on student needs and, as a result, students present uneven levels of engagement and academic achievement.
- Streamline the alignment of resources so that all students have the opportunity to undertake research and produce rigorous work products. (1.3)
 - The principal's budgeting, coupled with staff input, result in the strategic use of resources aligned to the school's goals. However, the English as a second language teacher and teachers of students with Individual Education Plans are at the beginning stages of sharing best practices and strategies with their peers. This impedes optimal support to further accelerate the achievement and progress of English language learners and students with disabilities. Additionally, although computers are available in most classrooms, all teachers do not yet integrate this valuable resource into their long-range plans to enable students to publish end-of-unit reports or projects. As such, research strategies aligned with project-based learning is not yet consistent across all classrooms, precluding students from producing higher level work.
 - Although the schedule allows for grade level teams to meet weekly, some teams are not consistently receiving optimal support and are not using professional literature to help guide the development of differentiated activities and rigorous academic tasks that engage learners at all levels, including special needs and higher achieving students. As a result, teaching practices are uneven and the academic gap between the lower and higher achieving students has widened.
- Utilize a uniform protocol for classroom observations to provide a common lens that evaluates teaching practices and identifies next steps. (4.1)
 - School leaders utilize walkthroughs, formal and informal observations to support end of year decisions. The follow up on next steps however, for some faculty members, is infrequent, informal and does not incorporate defined timeframes. Additionally, supervisors have not aligned this feedback with student work in order to more closely provide actionable feedback. Both limitations mean that there are missed opportunities to accelerate teacher growth and student outcomes.
 - Although teacher observations note strengths and areas for improvement, school leaders have not yet fully and thoughtfully aligned their feedback to a research-based tool. As a result, expectations for teacher practice are not clearly defined so that school leaders can adequately accelerate professional growth in order to impact greater student outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: John B Russwurm	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