

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Renaissance School of the Arts
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school M377

410 EAST 100 STREET
MANHATTAN
NY 10029

Principal: TAMMY PATE

Dates of review: February 13-14, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Luz T. Cortazzo

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Renaissance School of the Arts is a middle school with 200 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 47% Black, 50% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 31% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 89.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school provides a safe, respectful and nurturing environment where students are consistently engaged in their learning and are strongly supported in their personal and academic development. (1.4)
 - o Students and parents acknowledge that the school is a safe haven where students' social, emotional and academic needs are readily addressed. A review of the School Survey, incident reports and attendance data led to the formation of a committee to address patterns of absences and tardiness, as well as incident reports. The school established an incentive award system towards improving attendance and is currently using "school messenger" as a tool to improve student absences and tardiness. As a result, there is evidence of a decrease in student incidents and an increase in student attendance.
 - o The school's small, inclusive culture allows students to be well known by staff who support their academic and social growth. Students and parents appreciate that they can turn to teachers and members of the pupil personnel team to help resolve personal issues and concerns that interfere with learning. As a result, of the strong arts programs six grade students are engaged and interested in their learning. They spend eight weeks in an Arts Block Exposure, before rotating to their next Art Strand. At the end of the six grade students choose a major. Students report that the school supports their social emotional learning and that their voice and active participation influence school-wide decisions, such as the development of a rewards incentive program that celebrates students making good choices. The student's City Council and Student Committee decide how the "Spirit Bucks" are earned, collected and spent.
- Effective student support services and collaborations provide students with a wide range of opportunities to grow academically and socially. (4.4)
 - o The school's guidance counselor and social worker share strategies and provide workshops that support the professional development of teachers so that they are better prepared to service challenging students. Additionally, access to student teacher interns from Hunter and City Colleges align well with other school-based supports throughout the school day to meet the students' academic needs in a cohesive manner. Arrays of external partnerships such as the Urban Advantage Initiative provide students and families with extensive social service and science-based recreational activities. Consequently, services are deeply embedded and well integrated in school culture and directly impact students' academic opportunities and social emotional growth as noted in the calm environment prevalent in the school.
- The teacher-generated curriculum offers a wide range of experiences and choice, including the arts, to facilitate students' ownership of learning (1.1)
 - o The school's established LEAD team, a group of four experienced teachers and two administrators, carefully reviewed the citywide expectations, the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), adapted and aligned existing curriculum in English language arts, math and social studies, and subsequently infused rigorous science projects and non-fiction reading and persuasive writing into every content area. The LEAD team conducts data analysis and examines

student work during Friday staff meetings and leads professional development informed by their findings. As a result, teachers are positioned to expose all students, including students with disabilities and second language learners, to a rich curriculum that teaches critical thinking skills and concrete content knowledge through strong, meaningful units of study, such as the social studies unit on "Colonial America" where the students analyze the social and economic tension that grew between England and the Colonists in the 1760s.

- The principal aligns resources and makes effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning. (1.3)
 - o In alignment with the school's instructional goals, the principal has inaugurated the LEAD team. The LEAD team includes four lead teachers representing each academic department to provide a balance of demonstration lessons, faculty presentations, data analysis, professional development and weekly collaborative planning sessions with individual teacher teams. The intended school-wide impact of the LEAD team is visible in the instructional decisions and specific practices observed in the classrooms such as a school-wide implementation of Cornell note-taking strategy, Accountable Talk, word walls, reflective journals and bulletin board displays.
 - o The principal uses the budget strategically to channel resources to the classroom through additional staff. Teacher and student time is structured to respond to the learning needs of all students. Teacher assignments and student groupings are strategic as seen in the Collaborative Team Teaching classes on each grade. Two teachers co-teach the class, thereby reducing the total teacher-student ratio. Consequently, students receive one-on-one intervention in a caring environment and benefit from individualized attention that allows them to progress at their own pace. Although expensive, these resources align well with the needs of the students and the "No Limits, No Boundaries" philosophy of the school. This results in students engaging in rigorous academic tasks and developing higher order thinking skills as evident during science project time.
- The principal and faculty have an ongoing solid understanding of the performance of all students, by group and by subject, which effectively informs instructional revisions throughout the year. (2.2)
 - o Teachers at the school consistently demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of each student's varying needs, as demonstrated by their ongoing analysis of a wide range of data, including results from Acuity, and performance task, looking at student writing using a protocol, examples of student science projects, examining and refining curriculum and unit test grades. As a result of supplementing summative data with these pieces, teachers are equipped to adjust their teaching resources and implement strategies to challenge students appropriately. Additionally, teacher teams across the school meet continually as part of their ongoing structured collaborative work, and informally during the science content level meetings, to further analyze the rigor of performance tasks and ensure their alignment with the taught curricula.
- All members of the school community continually participate in purposeful professional learning opportunities with an eye for improving teacher practice and deepening student understanding in alignment with key standards. (4.3)
 - o Professional learning occurs in customized fashion and most staff, including the principal, benefit from a variety of opportunities inside and outside the school, including: team meetings, curriculum planning institutes and conferences.

Consequently, teachers are continually immersed in the process of authentically familiarizing themselves with how the implementation of the CCLS and citywide expectations best support student achievement. Their reflections and new understandings manifest in their professional learning in classrooms throughout the school. The principal has identified a team of new and experienced teachers to lead the facilitation of key work streams, including the content and grade-level inquiry work as well as the CCLS and citywide instructional expectations rollout. These teachers own the great responsibility of listening to and synthesizing their colleagues' contributions and concerns and ultimately communicating them to the principal. As a result, the intended outcome and impact of the LEAD team is visible throughout the school in classrooms, bulletin boards and in the alignment of specific practices that include the school-wide implementation of Cornell note-taking strategy. These practices illustrate student learning, highlight the process, reflect teacher feedback, and illustrate alignment to state standards and the CCLS.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that parents are involved in school-wide decision making and planning so that the school develops an additional group of constituents to support college and career readiness efforts, as well as other school goals. (3.1)
 - o School leadership and teachers analyze a great wealth of data, including students' academic achievement outcomes, attendance trends, and online occurrence reports, in order to identify the key school-wide goals which will benefit children most. However, at this time, parents express that they are just beginning to join the goal-setting conversation during parent meetings. As such, the extended school community is not fully informed of this year's action plan for continued school improvement and, consequently, cannot yet support the school in its efforts.
- Consolidate multiple databases to enable teachers, administrators, parents and students to analyze the impact of interventions and effectively track sub-groups of students' progress towards their achievement goals across all core subjects. (5.3)
 - o The principal, teacher teams and individual teachers all analyze data to place students school-wide in suitable groups of ten students that will give them the appropriate level of academic challenge, known as the "Target Ten." Similarly, every teacher in the school uses a balance of quantifiable interim data from Acuity, Skills Tutor, unit tests or conference notes, in order to address the changing academic and social needs of individual students. However, at this time, the school does not yet use one uniform tool that enables all members of the school community to access performance and progress data through a common lens for students with disabilities or English language learners. As a result, the staff does not own a shared repository that could drive one common voice regarding student progress.
- Deepen and strategically differentiate instruction for student sub-groups so that all lessons engage students and offer suitable challenge at their level, including effective questioning that elicits higher-order thinking and extends learning. (1.2)
 - o Though the use of "Big Ideas" and effective questions, classroom practices reflected a clear set of beliefs around student centered learning. Throughout classroom visits, there were few examples of strong questioning and higher order student discussion. In one math class, students discussed and applied concepts needed to divide and multiply mixed numbers in pairs; and in an English class,

students in the "Note Taking Center" created questions using Bloom's questioning prompts. Across classrooms, however, teaching strategies, questioning, critical thinking opportunities and routines were not consistently designed and leveraged to meet the needs of all students. As a result, some individuals and groups of students are not provided with multiple entry points into the curricula, limiting their ability to produce meaningful work products.

- Use a research-based framework in order to improve teacher effectiveness that will result in increased student achievement. (4.1)
 - o Although the school has a common understanding of effective teaching that is articulated by the principal and teachers, the school has not yet put in place frequent cycles of observations that include suitable feedback or clear next steps aligned to a research-based rubric. This hinders the school's ability to provide for follow up relative to implementing the noted changes, or to use evidence of student outcomes to identify next steps to improve teacher practice.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Renaissance School of the Arts	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
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