

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

The Ralph Bunche School

Elementary School 132

132 – 15 218th Street

Queens

NY 11413

Principal: Alicia N. Davis

Dates of review: February 13 – 14, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Lenon Murray

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Ralph Bunche School is an elementary school with 393 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 92% Black, 6% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 10% 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 93.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has a rigorous, engaging, standards-based curriculum that includes Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks and addresses the needs of a diverse group of learners to increase student achievement. (1.1)
 - The leadership and faculty have developed a yearlong curriculum in core subject areas that is facilitated by pacing calendars for each grade. These pacing calendars are adjusted by grade and aligned by teacher teams as needed during their meetings. Essential questions are developed during collaboration to capture important learning objectives. Curriculum maps for kindergarten through grade 5 are inclusive of teaching points, units of study, assessments and mentor texts, which are common texts used as teaching tools. Consequently, teachers are aware of what students need to learn and they teach strategically to increase achievement.
 - Teachers actively use the CCLS tasks to emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking throughout the curriculum. They are using their textbooks as resources rather than as an addition to the curriculum. Textbooks are carefully selected to provide sufficient complexity in nonfiction on grade level. Students are asked to write to express their opinions and argue points of view persuasively. As a result, all student subgroups are engaged on the topics of choice such as why they admire a famous man or woman of science and are making progress in writing as measured by standards-based rubrics.
- Teachers use strategies and techniques based on how they believe students learn best and facilitate differentiation that extends learning to all students with multiple entry points to improve outcomes. (1.2)
 - The school faculty believes that students learn best when their successes are acknowledged and the school community regards each person with deep respect. Positive character traits like honesty, caring and teamwork are highlighted and built into the literacy curriculum. Students are praised for acts of kindness and community service. In addition to this belief system, the school uses the workshop model with a large amount of demonstration and supervised practice. An explicit aspect of respect for the students is the idea that children learn in unique and individualized ways and the teachers across classrooms make consistent efforts to differentiate their presentation. In a special education grade three/four classroom one group of three students was working on solving a math word problem, another group of three was working on a computer program on the same topic, while the advanced group of two students were explaining their methodology. In other classes teachers use data to group students who are below grade level, for individualized intervention and re-teaching. Students who are on level often work collaboratively on assignments. Students who are above level are expected to work independently more regularly. As a result, special education students, English language learners (ELLs) and students in the lowest third have shown gains in reading and math as measured on unit tests.

- School leadership makes strategic organizational decisions that are aligned to their instructional goals and increase student performance. (1.3)
 - The school's major instructional goals were developed after analysis of summative and school generated data. Teacher schedules have set time periods for teacher team meetings. They meet weekly for formal scheduled times and multiple times informally on their common preps or during their lunch periods, voluntarily. Academic intervention and support for struggling students is accomplished through a co-teaching push-in and small group pull-out models which are implemented daily. The school's technology has been gradually upgraded through grants sought by the principal from local political and community leaders. Teachers ensure that students receive independent computer time a minimum of twice per week. Class sizes have been kept at twenty five and under for grades kindergarten through three and under thirty for grades four and five. Consequently teacher and student time is maximized on direct instruction and has led to improvement in writing non-fiction essays using text-based arguments.
- The school leaders and faculty use assessments that support their curriculum and analyze data that enables them to adjust instructional decisions at the classroom level in order to improve academic performance. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams effectively align assessments with their key learning standards to inform their instructional decisions. They develop rubrics that cover all aspects of student writing, projects and assignments. The teams focus on providing specific strategies that their individual members can easily use in their classrooms to meet the needs of their diverse group of students. Teachers across all grade levels use assessment binders to monitor individual student progress on standardized tests, unit tests and interim assessments. Teachers often use classroom assignments and even homework to check for understanding. One to one conferring between the teacher and student is a major check which is done a minimum of three times a week. Teachers use mid-workshop transition time to check for student progress and understanding. As a result, teachers make adjustments to the pacing calendars, lesson plans and essential questions to more precisely meet students' learning needs.
- The school has a strong and proactive observation system that supports the building of effective teacher instructional strategies and results in improved student outcomes. (4.1)
 - Through the use of the Danielson Framework, which is a researched teacher classroom observation tool, school leaders conduct short, frequent cycles of formal and informal observations to monitor teacher's instructional practices. They provide specific feedback on teacher strengths, areas of need and next steps for improvements. The administration reviews teacher conference notes, student work, and goal-setting as well as student data to analyze each teacher's effectiveness. Newer teachers meet biweekly with the assistant principal to discuss their classroom environments, student learning centers and specific teaching strategies. As a result, teachers plan and successfully implement

differentiated lessons that lead to improved student outcomes as measured on unit tests.

- Data driven differentiated learning goals for all students including subgroups promote a broad base of support for continuous progress and student achievement. (3.2)
 - Teacher teams, organized by grade level, analyze available data and set goals for the groups of students under their instructional supervision. The lowest third of students in grades kindergarten through two have goals around vocabulary development and language acquisition. Students in grade five have goals around writing persuasive essays using strong, logical arguments. Math goals for students with disabilities on grades three through five include precise approaches to solving word problems. The goals are differentiated for students as measured by their achievement of their interim goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase family engagement in information sharing and meaningful school decision-making to promote school progress and meet high expectations. (2.4)
 - Parents receive some regular communication about their children's progress, goals and units of study. They are quite supportive of the school and its academic vision. However, they do not specifically know how to consistently help their children reach individual goals, take the next steps needed and track progress. Parents had a very general idea of the CCLS tasks. They express willingness to support the decision-making processes in the school during the parent meeting and on surveys. Consequently, additional targeted communication between the home and school could enhance parent engagement in school decision-making and increase progress as evidenced by parent concerns.
- Improve the tracking of student progress for subgroups at the team level to more positively impact the achievement of student learning goals for all students. (3.3)
 - Individual teachers develop goals for their students. Teachers identify the students in need of additional intervention and communicate that information to parents and families. Students whose promotion is in doubt receive consistent support throughout the school year. In teacher team meetings, teachers examine student work to brainstorm strategies for individual students. However, teams do not formally focus on student subgroups like students with disabilities and English language learners (ELL's). As a result, while teachers are able to meet the needs of individually targeted students, they are often unable to see larger trends among student subgroups or apply the work with individual students to larger student subgroups that the data may identify.

- Target the provision of specific professional development that would enhance deeper personal reflection, self-evaluation and self-initiated improvement in classroom practice to increase student achievement. (4.3)
 - The school leadership provides multiple opportunities for teachers to engage in study groups, professional development both in and outside of school, and individualized coaching in their classrooms. However, inter-visitations and plans for specific improvement are primarily reserved for teachers who are struggling with their practice. As a result, opportunities for the majority of staff to observe exemplary instructional practice and engage in reflective dialogue concerning student outcomes are not an embedded pattern, leading to less than optimal growth for all teachers.

- Use data with greater precision to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams and leadership development at the school to drive student progress. (5.4)
 - Minutes, agendas and teacher feedback sheets from teacher team meetings are consistently reviewed by the school administration. The assistant principal regularly visits each team to observe the process and the work. The school leaders are responsive to the expressed needs of each team. Teacher leaders receive coaching on their leadership competencies from administration on a monthly basis. The idea of identifying and working on goals and strategies for sub-groups is being integrated. However, the school lacks an articulated formal structure to evaluate the effectiveness of team work on student achievement and to evaluate the development of teacher leaders. Consequently, the absence of a more transparent and explicit system lessens the development of teacher leadership to directly drive student progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: The Ralph Bunche 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