

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Ruby G. Allen**

**Elementary School**

**89-02 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue**

**Queens**

**NY 11369**

**Principal: Andrew Paccione**

**Dates of review: January 10 - 11, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Ruby G. Allen School is an elementary school with 1152 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 02% Black, 84% Hispanic, 03% White, and 11% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 94.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school's safe and inclusive environment fosters a high level of trust and positive attitudes towards learning, strongly enhancing students' personal and academic development. (1.4)
  - To address a School Survey concern regarding discipline, school leaders created a committee comprised of teachers, guidance counselor, parents and administrators to improve student behavior and increase academic and social development. A product of the committee's work is the institution of the "Rising Star" program, through which students who demonstrate good citizenship and immense effort completing all class work and homework receive an award at the Parent Teacher Association meetings. Classroom teachers and the guidance counselor know students well. They closely monitor students' attendance and strongly support their social development. For example, in an effort to increase attendance, the school developed guidelines to follow in the event a student absence for two consecutive days. Implementation of these guidelines has resulted in a 2% increase in attendance since September. Consequently, the school maintains a sharp focus on the academic and personal development of students.
- Teaching practices and lessons across classrooms are consistently differentiated so that students have multiple opportunities to meet their learning needs, resulting in improved learning. (1.2)
  - Teachers across the school use data and their personal understanding of students' strengths, interests and needs to group students for learning. Data generated from state and city assessments, Teacher's College made assessments across subjects is analyzed frequently so that learning activities and student groups are adjusted based on learning outcomes. Lessons engage students across grades in advanced, on level and intervention groups that provide ample scaffolds to improve their learning. For example, during visits to classrooms, students worked in groups according to their need on differentiated learning tasks that offered various entry points for all students and resulted in active student thinking and participation. As a result, classroom data indicates improved achievement in reading and math evident in student portfolios, unit test and Teacher's College assessments.
- School leaders make informed and purposeful organizational decisions that improve instruction, and meet students' needs, resulting in increased achievement. (1.3)
  - The school uses its resources successfully to improve the learning outcomes of all students. For example, the school created a prep schedule which encourages teacher collaboration two to three times per week within and across grade levels. Teachers meet on Thursdays with their grade level colleagues. All teachers have common preps and an additional sixth period prep to analyze student data, examine units of study, review student work and reflect on instructional practices. Grade

leaders, the discipline committee and the newspaper committee receive a seventh prep twice a month to meet with administrators to discuss school issues. The teams are influential in leading the initiative to revise the curriculum, improve monitoring tools and enhance communication around students' academic progress. For example, teams of teachers create highly engaging visual, auditory and kinesthetic academic tasks to improve sight word recognition and vocabulary. Post assessment results indicated that 90% of the target students increased their ability to read sight words, from 5 sight words in isolation to 25 words. The school received a Reso-A Grant to upgrade their technology server and purchase smart boards and laptops. This has led to students being actively engaged in more meaningful instruction across the school, evident in an increase of 55% more students who moved at least one reading level on Teacher's College assessment, particularly for English language learners, and student writing show improvements based on students' writing portfolios.

- Teachers effectively use a wide range of assessments that are aligned to the curriculum to guide instructional decisions and inform planning, resulting in a clear understanding of the performance of students. (2.2)
  - The Writing Inquiry Team developed a writing continuum toolkit adapted from the Teacher's College Writing Continuum document. The toolkit includes a rubric to assess the proficiency level of students' narrative writing skills and yield specific trends in student writing to differentiate instruction. This toolkit has helped teachers link assessment and instruction as evident in grade planning and resulting instructional modifications. Teachers collaboratively analyze to see where a students narrative writing falls in a continuum of development and plan next steps based on the strengths and needs for each child. As a result, teacher's report that students' narrative writing has shown a significant improvement in elaboration and structure.
- The school engages students and families in school decision making activities and regularly communicates information regarding student performance, resulting in strong buy in and support for success. (2.4)
  - The school provides families feedback regarding student reading progress, including strengths, weaknesses and next learning steps. A parent handbook outlines the reading progress a child should make in a school year, shows a sample text at each level, explains text challenges and provides strategies parents can use to improve their child's learning. In addition, the school uses an assessment program which generates letters four times a year informing parents of their child's independent reading level and how it correlates to State benchmarks. To increase communication with parents about student outcomes, the school offers continuous assistance with the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) Parent Link. A parent room has been established with a computer so parents have access all day. Thus, these efforts support families in utilizing tools to access and understand their child's performance, resulting in an open exchange of information that promotes learning.

- The school conveys high expectations that promote parent involvement and support learning so that school, students and families work toward meeting the school's goals. (3.4)
  - Teacher teams and staff communicate high expectations through parent workshops on attendance, school discipline, state assessments and promotional criteria. Students participate in conferences and small group activities with the guidance counselor to improve their self-confidence and enhance their social skills so that they achieve their academic and personal goals. Parents report that they value the school's efforts in communicating high expectations for students' academic, attendance and personal success. Students and families participate in meetings that provide important information regarding promotion and middle school selection. For example, the school held a meeting for grade 5 parents and students to explain the articulation process, distributed information regarding the Middle School Fair. As a result, students are eager to attend middle school and are well prepared for their next level of learning.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Enhance the use of classroom observations along with the analysis of student work data to improve professional development and student achievement. (4.1)
  - School leaders offer recommendations for teachers to improve their instructional practice through formal and informal observations and analysis of student work products. The school has adopted Danielson's research-based rubric to articulate clear expectations for teacher practices and use that framework for development of teachers. However, school leaders have just begun to conduct short frequent cycles of classroom visits and the feedback to teachers lack a common instructional lens, which is not yet fully connected to the research based rubric used by the school. This limits their ability to identify teachers' specific areas for improvement to strengthen their teaching craft and positively impact student outcomes.
- Expand systems to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams and teacher leadership development to support continuous student learning. (5.4)
  - School leaders are developing systems to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams and leadership opportunities. However, limited feedback to teams regarding the effectiveness of their work currently restricts the enhancement of the work of professional collaborations and structures. Consequently, the school's ability to provide feedback on target improvements in the work of teacher teams and capacity building is emerging.
- Improve goal setting so that there is greater consistency in identifying precise long and short term goals so that they are leveraged to meet identified needs of students and result in improved learning outcomes. (3.2)
  - Teacher teams and individual teachers use data regularly to set students' learning goals across grades and subjects to improve learning and these

goals have leveraged some positive changes in classroom practice. However, the practice of setting interim goals and the use of specific academic interim benchmarks to meet granular learning targets of identified groups of students is not yet fully embedded across the school, resulting in some students not fulfilling their maximum potential.

- Increase the coherence of curricular modifications so that academic tasks promote higher levels of thinking and cognitive engagement for all students. (1.1)
  - The school uses curriculum maps that support rigorous habits and higher order skills and implement standards-based lessons. However, modifications to meet the needs of English language learners and special needs students are not fully coherent across grades and subjects. Consequently, lessons and academic tasks do not always incorporate critical thinking skills to continually engage all students in developing cognitive thinking skills. This limits the achievement of subgroups of students as evident in the school's Progress Report and State accountability achievement status.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: The Ruby G. Allen School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			<b>X</b>	

**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		

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>