

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Renaissance Middle School**

**Middle School 192**

**109 – 89 204 Street  
Queens  
NY 11412**

**Principal: Harriet Diaz**

**Dates of review: March 1 – 2, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Lenon Murray**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Renaissance School is a middle school with 685 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 94% Black, 4% Hispanic, 0%White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school designs and utilizes a rigorous, engaging, standards-based curriculum that incorporates Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks and meets the needs of a variety of learners to increase achievement. (1.1)
  - The school has aligned its curriculum in its core subject areas with the Common Core State Standards (CCLS) ahead of the actual requirement to do so. CCLS literacy and math tasks have been designed by teacher teams using an interdisciplinary approach. Some adaptations were made to items from the common core library using online resources available to them. All the students at the school, including special education and English as second language learners (ESL), have completed a minimum of two CCLS literacy tasks, one CCLS math task and one interdisciplinary CCLS task combining ELA, math and social studies. The school is making a tremendous push to increase the volume and rigor of student writing using text-based protocols. Students in grades six through eight are expected to use evidence to support their arguments. As a result, students have made strong improvements in the quality of their writing from the first to second semesters as measured by the teacher developed writing rubrics.
- A coherent set of beliefs about how students learn is the basis of multiple differentiated approaches that address the individual needs of students and lead to improvement in work products. (1.2)
  - The school believes that students learn best by responding to challenging essential questions. In social studies classrooms, students engage in conversations that elicit their prior knowledge before the teacher presents new information. In a seventh grade math class students' responses to the warm-up questions of the day determine their placement in flexible groups and the specific presentation by the teacher. Across classrooms data is used to group students for instruction. In an eighth grade science class, the teacher explains the questions before any observations are recorded involving the number, color and type of M&M's in their samples. Teachers circulate the rooms while students are working to coach them through their challenges. Network instructional coaches are working with teachers to enable them to deepen students' literacy skills to facilitate deeper reading of texts across subject areas. As a result, students have improved by 12% on formative math assessments from the previous semester.
- School leaders and faculty make strategically sound organizational decisions that are fully aligned to instructional goals and improve students' work products. (1.3)
  - The school's cabinet and instructional team meets weekly to discuss the utilization of its resources and the implementation of its plans. A new skills program was adopted to address deficient areas of students with disabilities through direct instruction and more careful tracking of literacy skills. Web-based programs have been included to provide individual

tutorials for struggling learners. The school has been divided into three academies (University prep, Allied Health Sports & Medicine and Multi-Media) to create small manageable cohorts of students that are seen by the same teachers and become extremely well known to them. Struggling students are supported by push in intervention models that decreases the student-teacher ratio. Teacher team meetings of subject area specialists are held twice a week. Afterschool and Saturday academic and extra-curricular coaching ensure that the whole school is focused on student learning. Consequently, all decisions actively promote optimal learning experiences that result in improvement in student assignments and work products.

- The school uses on-going assessment practices that support the curriculum and analyzes data that leads to adjustments in instructional practices at the team and classroom level. (2.2)
  - Teams of teachers collaboratively create assessments that are aligned to their selected standards and units of study. They develop rubrics in subject area teams across grades six through eight. The social studies team develops document-based questions that assess students' ability to use text-based evidence in their writing. The English language arts team of teachers uses the analysis of constructed response questions as a teaching tool and they make adjustments to their teaching based on the outcomes. The math team assesses fractions, ratio and probability based on a data analysis demonstrating these as major areas of weakness. Teachers circulate the room to check for understanding during the lesson as the students discuss taught material or work on tasks. The consistent utilization of assessments leads directly to changes in teaching practice that promotes student improvement.
- The school leadership has a consistent and proactive classroom observation policy for the analysis of student learning outcomes and leads to improved instructional practices for all pedagogues including new teachers. (4.1)
  - The school leadership engages in short, frequent cycles of observation of classroom teaching. They then conduct meaningful conversations that provide specific feedback that teachers can use immediately. The principal and three assistant principals use the Danielson framework, a teacher classroom observation tool, to provide differentiated support to their teachers. Newer teachers are provided with mentors and the essential knowledge to improve their classroom management as well as instructional practices. Student work is an important part of all teacher evaluations. This multi-faceted approach has led to improvement in teacher practice as recorded in teacher observation reports.
- The school has a clear, coherent vision of its future that is distilled into a list of focused, data-based goals that are widely supported in the school community to improve outcomes. (3.1)
  - The school's instructional team and teacher teams study a wide range of summative and formative data (State test results, subgroup performance, attendance, parent involvement numbers, suspension data, etc), as well as feedback from parents, teachers and students, to create a list of focused goals and action plans. These goals focus on improving student

performance for college and career readiness. The school consistently communicates its vision to the entire community including teachers, families and students. This is done at faculty conferences, grade conferences, parent association meetings, School Leadership Team meetings and workshops. As a result, parents are generally aware of school goals and support their students toward improved outcomes.

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

- Expand the utilization of grading policies and tools to organize and analyze student performance trends to enhance student achievement. (2.3)
  - The school is refining its grading policy to include the CCLS tasks. They have completed three CCLS tasks school-wide which are assessed with the new grading rubric. Rubrics in ELA social studies math and science are designed with criteria which reflect the specific content competencies. Although the entire school is regularly using rubric based performance levels across grades, some teachers are still using percentages, letter grades and additional criteria. This creates additional work for teacher teams in organizing and capturing meaningful performance trends to support targeted student progress.
- Deepen the communication of high expectations to staff, students and families while continuing your support of students to achieve at the highest levels. (3.4)
  - The school communicates high expectations to the entire school community through its constantly updated website, newsletters and assemblies. Students receive interim progress reports and homework and class assignments are tracked. However, these reports do not specify students' next learning steps for rapid improvement in their learning. Student work is available in notebooks, portfolios and bulletin board displays throughout the school. However, not all student work includes comments for improvement. In addition, parents have insufficient information about their children's specific learning targets to properly support the highest achievement. As a result, students cannot consistently articulate what they need to do to accelerate their improvement and improve their learning and parents lack sufficient classroom information to help move their children to their next learning level.
- Refine professional development to promote greater self-accountability among teachers for their classroom practices and increased opportunities for leadership to improve student progress. (4.3)
  - Teachers engage in some inter-visitations to share instructional practices. They receive training from network specialists and outside consultants in improving teaching practice to move students. They work together to expand their repertoire of differentiated instruction. The school has not, however, created model lab sites that offer teachers opportunities for shared reflection and a common lens through which to evaluate their practice. Teachers serve as facilitators on their teams without an explicit ladder to develop leadership competencies. As a result, in the absence of

these supports prospects for professional growth, including administrators, are lost and capacity building is not maximized.

- Streamline use of data in the evaluation of teacher team effectiveness and leadership development at the school. (5.4)
  - The teacher teams work consistently and collaboratively throughout the school and engage in regular discussions involving data to determine the academic needs of students. The school does not, however, have a formal system to routinely evaluate the effectiveness of their work and the leadership opportunities available at the school. As a result, this hampers the school's ability to define precisely the instructional practices that have the greatest impact on student achievement across all grade levels.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Renaissance Middle School	UD	D	P	WD
<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>	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?			<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>	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?			<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>	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?			<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>	

<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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			<b>X</b>				
<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>