

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Rockwood Park
Elementary – Middle School 207

159-15 88 STREET
QUEENS
NY 11414

Principal: LINDA SPADARO

Dates of review: April 03 - 4, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Rockwood Park is an elementary-middle school with 800 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 3% Black, 15% Hispanic, 77% White, 4% Asian students, and 1% other students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 94.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty provide targeted and reciprocal feedback to students and their families and effective structures support them in the use of tools that result in a steady stream of information about students' progress and next learning steps.(2.4)
 - o Student planners, email, and parent-teacher conferences, provide optimal opportunities for all parents to learn about the progress of their children and next steps in learning, including student performance as measured against the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). A rubric used to score tasks is placed on the back of parent letters informing them how well their child performed on the literacy CCLS tasks, and invite parents into the school for further discussion if needed. Honor roll is prominently displayed in the school's corridor, and students in grades 6 through 8 are acknowledged for exhibiting exemplary character, community service, scholarship, leadership, and citizenship by induction into the ARISTA society. Consequently, students and their families are well apprised of class expectations and their children's ongoing academic, attendance, and behavioral performance.
 - o Parents continue to use ARIS Parent Link, but comment that during the previous school year, they were unable to fully determine how well their children had been performing yearlong in all subject areas. The principal's open door policy provided opportunities for parents to share their concerns and engage in school decision making to implement EnGrade, a grading tool, which provides students and their families with timely information regarding students' performance in all subject areas. As a result, parents say that they are able to support their children at home and there is a shared commitment for the betterment of all students.
- A clear set of beliefs about how students learn ensures that a standards-based curriculum result in routines that are consistently differentiated and students have multiple entry points into the curricula that result in improved student performance. (1.2)
 - o Flexible and differentiated grouping, accountable talk strategies, mini-lessons, checks for understanding, and peer editing are apparent across the school. Teachers collectively reflect and refine their practice during team meetings to ensure that they meet the needs of their students. In a grade 6 general education class, the classroom teacher is supported by the grade 7 accelerated math teacher, who engages students in small group instruction in order to reduce the student to teacher ratio, and address the diverse learning needs of the class. Hence, students are able to articulate data sources used to formulate their groups, they share their strengths and weaknesses with peers, and student progress in math performance is evidenced on formative assessment results.
 - o Across the school there is a focus on higher order questioning and thinking based on Webb's Depth of Knowledge to cognitively engage all learners, including subgroups. In a grade 7 general education class, students work in small, differentiated groups, and delve deeply into the novel, "The House on Mango Street", by Sandra Cisneros. Students engage in peer editing, and various tasks sheets address the groups' differentiated needs. In a grade 5 integrated collaborative team class, students work together in one of three small skill-based differentiated groups and complete fractions with unlike denominators, and grade 2 students work in 5 distinct groups and use their time

at workstations to improve fluency, author's purpose, and guided reading skills. As a result, all students experience teaching and learning in ways that address their individual needs and achievement of the curricula.

- School leaders make purposeful and informed organizational decisions and optimal time for teacher collaboration support student learning across the school. (1.3)
 - All learners use computer-based programs to improve their literacy and math skills, by engaging in simulations that push their thinking, and the home school connection ensures that parents are involved in their children's learning. Well-selected computer-based programs, and the implementation of a new effective math program with on-line support, result in improved data outcomes from assessments such as Instructionally Targeted Assessments and unit assessments sufficiently linked to the programs.
 - Despite budgetary constraints, the principal creatively schedules opportunities for faculty to meet twice weekly for collaborative meetings. They analyze data, share effective instructional strategies, develop curriculum maps aligned to the CCLS, and develop customized tasks and rubrics for the primary purpose of improving student achievement. A teacher commented, "I feel that I have really grown this year; the data and the grouping really came together for me". Another teacher shares, "I have a better sense and more targeted view of how to implement strategies to help the students". Consequently, teachers know the precise learning needs and suitably engage their students in challenging tasks.
- School leaders gather a wide range of relevant and useful data that offers a clear portrait of students' strengths and weaknesses and enable them to track the progress of students with disabilities and adjustments are appropriately made. (2.1)
 - The leadership uses end-of-year summative data in English language arts, and math, the outcomes of the Progress Report including the Learning Environment Survey, and incident report data, to identify common trends across the school. As a result, the school has developed an accurate understanding of the strengths and weakness of students' needs. As per the school's State Accountability Report, there was a decrease in grade 8 students' performance in English language arts, specifically in areas such as sequencing and context clues. Students receive instruction that includes increased targeted instruction, differentiated groups, teacher push-in model of instruction, and teacher modeling. Student progress is regularly tracked so that appropriate adjustments and interventions, such as academic tutorial support may be made.
 - The leadership's regular analysis of Periodic Assessment data such as Acuity and ITA's, are used to supplement summative data, and enables the school to identify trends in literacy, such as figurative language. Interventions are incorporated expeditiously, and include visits to peer schools, plans for increased short frequent observations, implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI), increased differentiated support for teachers, and assistant principals and administrator's attendance at grade meetings. As a result, there is increased accountability for the performance of student subgroups, and English language learners and students with disabilities show growth on Periodic Assessment reports.
- Teachers create and use assessments, use a variety of rubrics, and checks for understanding, that clearly portray students' progress and performance and result in adjustments to instruction. (2.2)

- o Teachers' data binders are very well detailed and reflect a multitude of assessments and customized rubrics used to gauge the proficiency of students in all subject areas. The grade 5 teacher team identified figurative language and students' analysis of genre as a challenge. Teachers evaluated their instructional practice, and adjusted their lessons to include text support that enables them to provide targeted instruction to students in genre study, resulting in improved comprehension skills, in areas such as figurative language.
- o Analyses of Periodic Assessment data and computer-generated assessments help teachers determine the specific needs of all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. Monthly school wide assessments effectively track and monitor student progress, and enable teachers to create differentiated workstations and small learning groups. Teachers use exit slips, checklists, and peer editing, to ensure that students obtain mastery before proceeding to next level. In a grade 3 special education NEST program for general education and students with varying degrees of autism, students engage in small text-based groups, and use differentiated graphic organizers to write a story summary. Teachers work directly with students and provide instruction tailored to each child's needs. As a result, teacher planning is purposeful and ensures quality instruction for all students.
- The leadership uses an effective research-based common framework for classroom observation and provides feedback and next steps that result in improved teacher practice. (4.1)
 - o A strong school culture exists where teachers are excited and interested in developing their craft. The leadership uses short, frequent cycles of classroom informal observations and formal observations to offer feedback and next steps, such as deeper questioning to improve student engagement and discussion. This has resulted in a culture where teachers are motivated to share successful strategies based on peer-to-peer support, and improve their methodology.
 - o The observation of teacher practice is through the lens of a common framework, and teachers receive a myriad of professional support from the leadership, coaches, and Children First Network, to ensure that they are successful in its implementation of improving "questioning". Feedback is immediate, and accurately captures teachers' strengths and areas for improvement. The leadership uses email, face-to-face correspondence, and written reports to share individually the observation of teacher's practice and welcomes the professional exchange that results in a common instructional focus around strengthening teacher practice and improving student higher order thinking.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance systems for measuring progress towards interim goals to include the analysis of data and student performance to identify areas of improvements and plans for corrective action. (5.3)
 - o The principal meets frequently with parents and community members and shares the school's long-term goals that have been generated based on data from Progress Reports, the Learning Environment Survey, and State accountability reports. However, the school does not yet have fully developed systems that align annual planning to include evidence of student performance, such as meaningful work samples, so that goal setting strategically considers teacher development and the expectations of the CCLS in the plan for improvement.

- The principal establishes grade-specific and annual goals that address the improvements needed in literacy, math, and the expectations for the CCLS. However, some student goals are holistic, and do not reflect measurable benchmarks with suitable interim checkpoints. Hence, the school cannot fully determine if enough progress is being made along the way to achieve the goals.
- Strengthen systems to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams so that members share successes and engage in leadership opportunities that improve teacher practice. (5.4)
 - The weekly teacher team Inquiry schedule provides teachers with the chance to share best practices along with the analysis of student work and data. Lead teachers on teacher teams, meet regularly with the leadership, and engage in reflective and meaningful conversations regarding the effectiveness of their team's work. However, while teams share their work, currently the school has not developed a school-wide system to use quantifiable student results to measure each team's success. Thus, this limits the ability to confirm the exact impact specific strategies are having on student learning across the grades.
 - The principal encourages staff to take on leadership roles and serve in various capacities on teacher teams. Distributed leadership provides teachers with a voice in the selection of instructional resources, such as the school wide math program. However, the school has inconsistent plans to support the development of future teacher leaders, resulting in a diminished capacity to develop the full potential of staff members.
- Strengthen academic tasks to include rigor and higher order skills to ensure that a diversity of learners, including the lowest third, highest achieving students, and students with disabilities are sufficiently cognitively engaged. (1.1)
 - The school has comprehensive curricular that are aligned to the CCLS, and integrate the arts and technology. School leaders ensure that tasks promote secondary readiness in all grades through the emphasis on key standards, such as reading and writing and the integration of social studies. However, while teacher teams and the principal's instructional team regularly adjust the tasks to include enhanced academic rigor, this is not always reflected in the rubrics that accompany the tasks for all grades. As a result, opportunities for all students to be challenged to their highest levels are not a fully embedded practice.
- Enhance the manner in which information is shared with the larger community regarding long-term plans of the school to ensure broad support and acceleration of student achievement. (3.1)
 - Goals for the school are derived from the analysis of student work and measurable achievement. The principal uses the school leadership team and teacher teams' collaborative energy to assist in developing school wide goals. However, while goals are developed during planning meetings, such as the school leadership team, and shared during faculty conferences and parent meetings, presently goal setting does not involve the entire community. As a result, the school's awareness of broad base support for the school's course is hindered.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Rockwood Park	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	
1..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
-----------	-----------------------	----------	-------------------	----------	-------------------	-----------	-----------------------