

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Holcombe L. Rucker School of Community Research
High school 332

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BRONX
NY 10459

Principal: SHARIF RUCKER

Dates of review: January 05, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Elaine Gorman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Holcombe L. Rucker School of Community Research is a High school with 347 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 40% Black, 53% Hispanic, 1% White, 2% Asian students, and 4% other students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 16% 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 85.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Parents and students are highly appreciative for immediate and multiple opportunities to collaborate with staff to understand expectations and learning progressions resulting in shared commitments for student success. (2.4)
 - o The school has an exceptionally well thought out approach to engaging parents in consistent and reciprocal communications, including substantive conversations regarding their children's current performance and steps families can take to assist. Parents and students indicate that Jupiter, a real-time computer system, and the accessibility of the principal and staff, in person and by phone and email, make it possible "for parents to know how to help their children." Workshops, curriculum nights, job fairs and social trips, as well as a parent volunteering program, results in the involvement of greater numbers of parents in the important work of the school. Of the 118 parents who responded to the Learning Environment Survey, 99% indicated they had opportunities to be involved in the school.
- Multi-faceted supports by caring adults have created a highly respectful and inclusive environment where each student feels well known and part of an extended family. (1.4)
 - o Using patterns of attendance, incidents, and scholarship reports, a deeply embedded, staff embraced mentor-mentee program, has developed, and is foundational in connecting each child and family to a staff member. Documented by logs, shared among teachers at grade meetings and online systems, all staff more fully understand the strengths and needs of each student. Further, staff has implemented a grade-level character program that teachers model and infuse into all aspects of the school. Increased grade reporting, a substantial guidance system, and multi-pronged intervention systems, further engage students toward meeting graduation requirements. Opportunities such as student town halls, 'Men of Majesty', and community service increasing student voice and self confidence, as evidenced by student interactions with adults, reports from peer tutoring by both tutors and tutorees, and letters from former students, attest to the importance of support provided to students.
- In alignment with school goals, a committed school community makes intentional decisions regarding resources, including budget, technology, staff roles, and student groupings leading to team accountability for groups of students. (1.3)
 - o School leaders and staff have consensus about broad areas of need that must be positively impacted to further academic achievement among their diverse student population, and how resources are apportioned to meet identified goals. Purposeful decisions to match teacher strengths to student groupings, and smaller class sizes in selected content areas has resulted in Regents' scores that consistently exceed their Progress Report peer group and increased year-to-year credit accumulation comparisons. A commitment of time for department and grade meetings, team leader meetings, and daily planning for iZone teachers, has resulted in an exceptionally high level of teacher collaboration and accountability for groups of students as evidenced by teacher conversations and team documents, student contact logs, and reports by parents and students.

- Frequent cycles of feedback to teachers using an agreed upon researched-based rubric inform staff assignments, goals, and professional development in order to support teacher growth. (4.1)
 - o Teacher goals clearly align to school goals and are consistently referenced in formal observations with specific recommendations for next steps. Using Kim Marshall's rubric in areas of planning, management, and assessment, weekly cycles of informal classroom visits with immediate feedback are a high priority for administrators, and identify strengths and needs to effect changes in practice. A cabinet, consisting of administrators and teachers, collects input through surveys to assure continuous improvement of relevant and differentiated professional development and support for new teachers. Valued professional support, including intervisitations and peer coaching, has led to a common vision and produced models of promising practices, including high-level essential questions in some classrooms that guide instruction and assessment.
- Informed by common periodic assessments and ongoing collaboration, teams of teachers track progress and adjust goals for groups of students, influencing school-level goals and action plans. (3.3)
 - o Committed groups of teachers embrace opportunities to collaborate through grade-level and content-team structures that facilitate development of common assessments. Student results that are tracked through teacher developed tools and systems such as Jupiter grades allows staff to pay specific attention to students in the bottom one-third of achievement and identified subgroups in need of additional help. Consequently, student goals and groupings are established and adjusted consistently across teams leading to informed revisions to school goals and action plans to incrementally improve instruction and student outcomes.
 - o The practice of providing specific feedback to students and families is well embedded and consistent across teams and individual teachers. Competency matrices developed by the 10th grade iZone team provide an emerging model for content based learning targets with student reflection and revision, which many report as motivating them to meeting a four on a four-point scale. The work is also positively influencing teacher practice as they identify cross-content connections.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine existing curricula and accelerate implementation of Common Core action plans to consistently embed higher order skills into academic tasks resulting in greater cognitive engagement. (1.1)
 - o Current curriculum maps are aligned to State standards and most reference academic tasks intended to assess student learning, but maps do not detail a consistent plan for inclusion or assessment of rigorous academic habits and higher order skills. For some, curricula is not a road map for classroom practice and teacher teams do not yet make sufficient use of student work to precisely understand student needs, reducing the ability to cognitively engage students with well-matched instruction, impacting inconsistencies in credit accumulation.
 - o The English team has developed a substantive action plan, followed by math, to integrate Common Core Learning Standards into curricula and to develop more challenging tasks. However, as staff members are not yet aggressively moving the plan forward by using student work to assess achievement gaps for post-secondary readiness, efforts to increase four-year regular and weighted graduation rates have not yet produced desired results.

- Build on promising practices to raise the level of questioning to ensure all students demonstrate more robust student writing and classroom discourse. (1.2)
 - o There is a belief system that students learn best by doing and consistent routines across classrooms include flexible groups; however, there is an overdependence on worksheets, many that require low-level responses. While there have been efforts to increase student writing, including interdisciplinary projects based on community trips, such as the Intrepid, classrooms discussions are primarily teacher directed, lacking evidence of robust student thinking, also evidenced in most writing products. Additionally, while most teachers provide scaffolds and supports to assist students to reach current classroom standards, there are less consistent plans to reduce scaffolds, resulting in uneven student progress.
- Develop greater consistency in rigor of rubrics and checks for understanding to provide more precise feedback on curricular and instructional decisions for individual and groups of students. (2.2)
 - o Individual and teams of teachers consistently use rubrics but inconsistently apply rigor and more often align their work to assignments rather than standards, limiting the effectiveness of formative assessments as an incremental measure of curricular and instructional decisions.
 - o The administrative team places an emphasis on exit slips and student self-assessment, which many teachers use with varying degrees of effectiveness in adjusting day-to-day student learning. Moreover, the use of ongoing checks for understanding beyond informal observations during lessons is uneven, limiting real time response to student needs, resulting in some students unable to satisfactorily complete their work independently or within assigned timeframes.
- Leverage strong team collaborations to deepen analysis of learning challenges and further effective classroom practices to accelerate trajectory of student mastery. (3.2)
 - o Teams of teachers are consistent in reviewing student progress in classes to determine the social-emotional and learning needs of students, but too often analysis is limited to passing a course rather than root causes for concept or skill gaps. The precision of unpacking social-emotional needs has produced positive changes in students' connections to school. However, deep analysis of students' learning challenges and rigorous inquiry intended to make changes in classroom practice is not sufficiently robust, resulting in many students not meeting the college readiness standards on emerging local measures.
- Deepen incremental measures used to evaluate multiple organizational and instructional initiatives to respond strategically to student and adult learning needs embedded in long-term aspirations. (5.1)
 - o Current year school goals and action plans are situated within long-term aspirations for increasing student achievement on emerging curricular standards. Currently, most assessments of progress of instructional and organizational initiatives are outcomes measured on State and local report cards. Incremental impact measures of initiatives are developing or lack precision, limiting strategic response by school leaders and staff, and sufficient coherence between school organization and initiatives to accelerate student learning. This has resulted in cycles of initiatives by the school, but lack of consistent improvement in student performance.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Holcombe L. Rucker School of Community Research	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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