

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Ryder Elementary School

K114

**1077 Remsen Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Darwin Smith

Dates of review: January 29 - 30, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Ryder Elementary School is an elementary school with 684 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 85% Black, 10% Hispanic, 4% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes % English language learners and xx% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- With purpose and passion, the principal articulates a data-driven vision for school-wide improvement endorsed by all stakeholders resulting in common understandings of school improvement efforts. (3.1)
 - The principal scrutinizes a cadre of data to develop instructional and school-wide goals, which set the annual course for the school and guide student improvement efforts. For example, the School Comprehensive Educational Plan and Principal Performance Review document reflect four overarching objectives that envelope the learning needs of students and instigate best practices. Accordingly, the school's focus on citywide instructional expectations is evident in literacy, math, teacher effectiveness, and parental involvement action plans. In addition, a clearly articulated vision of the school's priorities is transparent on the school website and posted in the main corridor. Short-term action planning is the result of monitoring systems that track student progress and professional growth among teachers. This purposeful drive toward improvement leads to relevant modifications that elevate learning for all students such as embedding specific literacy skills in instructional tasks and prolonged units of study to build confidence and capacity for overcoming the challenge of solving complex math problems.
 - The entire school community contributes to the direction of the school and supports the principal's vision for improved student outcomes as evidenced by teacher input in determining school-wide foci and the active participation of parents as members of the school leadership team and parent-teacher association. Parents interviewed expressed knowledge of the school's annual goals and espouse, "The school is empowering". Hence, parents state that they work alongside teachers as dedicated volunteers and help set policy for school improvement. The work of developing a new grading policy is a direct result of parent voice in deciding school policy related to progress reporting. Stakeholders interviewed made favorable comment about the principal's acceptance of written plans that express ideas and new initiatives in order to make positive change for all students.
- Teachers and parents appreciate the clear communication of school-wide expectations and the partnerships in place that galvanize support for continued academic success. (3.4)
 - There is an articulated vision concerning student achievement and well-being that holds teachers accountable for every child achieving at their highest level. This is evident in public declarations posted on walls and bulletin boards that communicate high expectations for teaching and learning such as "Believe", "Yes, they CAN and we WILL do whatever it takes for our students to achieve SUCCESS" and during teacher team meetings. Coaches and instructional leads facilitate professional work and support capacity building so that school-wide expectations are shared across grades and the school stimulating collegial partnerships. Co-teaching, push-in models, inter-visitations, and inquiry create common

commitment to articulate values and beliefs held by administrators and the teaching community resulting in high levels of accountability for student learning as evidenced by a child-centered environment and the turnaround in school culture.

- Parents are aware of the implementation of State standards. They understand that the academic demands are higher and that their children are academically preparing for the future. The school engages parents in a variety of activities and informational meetings therefore, parents have a good understanding of school-level data and are highly informed as to their role in supporting the academic as well as social-emotional well-being of their children. Ongoing dialogue and established partnerships among stakeholders center on student learning and individual success. Thus, the Rise and Read program promotes literacy via parents and students reading together on Saturday, CAMBA, a nonprofit program provides recreational and family services, English as a Second Language and General Education Development (GED) classes for parents support adult learning, and Kings County Health Clinic offers preventive and therapeutic care to families. Concerted efforts to engage parents in the educational process lead to parents viewing themselves as important partners in the progress of the school as such they perpetuate high academic and social-emotional learning expectations for their children.
- Teachers and school leaders use a range of data to determine professional development needs, which result in adjustments in the planning of instruction. (2.2)
 - Teachers analyze skills data and student work to understand each student's strengths and areas for growth. Their analysis of formative and summative data results in curricula goal setting and instructional plans of action for groups of students and for themselves. They evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching by conducting baseline, midline and end-line assessments. Teachers utilize tracking sheets to record assessment results and maintain data binders. The principal and school leaders study gap analyses, comparative studies, and longitudinal data sets, which is the basis for determining school-wide professional development. Hence, the use of data by teachers and school leaders lead to adjustments to instruction, which include formulating learning targets, revising performance tasks, and tailoring lesson plans to incorporate higher level thinking tasks in math. In addition, the use of rubrics assist coherence in feedback to students on next step learning goals and generate teaching objectives such as an increased focus on vocabulary development, modified texts for English language learners. This work influences all faculty members working alongside colleagues to make appropriate instructional decisions that promote student progress and better performance. The use of varied assessment data results in professional planning that leads to small group instruction, tiered activities, and designated adults working with target students.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend the development of curricula aligned with Common Core Learning Standards in order to consistently promote high-level cognition for individual and groups of students. (1.1)
 - One hundred percent of the school's curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards in reading and math supported by sources that are Common Core developed such as Ready Books in upper grades and the newly purchased My Math program used in kindergarten through grade 5. The school's prioritized standards and concepts are in keeping with Citywide Instructional Expectations and the school implements units of study that they adopt or adapt from the Common Core Library. Nevertheless, the school's development of curriculum maps aligned to CCLS has not yet fully matured. Therefore, inconsistency in implementing literacy instructional shifts in all grades impedes student growth aimed at closing the achievement gap.
 - Currently, curriculum mapping to ensure coherence in teacher practice does not uniformly reflect extensions and enrichments for students with disabilities, English language learners, and high performing students as evidenced by curriculum maps reviewed across grade levels and content areas. Therefore, this work is emerging and does not yet engender appropriate modifications to maximize rigor and critical thinking processes that positively impact learning outcomes.
- Enrich teacher's capacity to differentiate lessons and to question strategically so that all learners have opportunity to experience tasks that foster appropriate challenge and stimulate higher order thinking. (1.2)
 - During classroom visits, meetings with students, and in conversation with the principal and teachers, stakeholders conveyed a shared set of beliefs about how students learn best, which serves as the basis for the school's instructional platform. For example, in all classrooms visited the learning objective was appropriately aligned to CCLS, teachers modeled a skill or strategy, and students engaged in both guided and independent practice. However, the majority of lesson plans does not include thoughtful higher order thinking prompts or lack diverse entry points into the lesson limiting access to learning objectives for all groups of students. Furthermore, a lack of explicit planning for class discussion and teacher questioning was evident in classes observed. Although in a fourth and fifth grade classroom, students used "agree" and "disagree" accountable talk stems, teacher facilitation did not lead to whole group discussions or individual elaborations that extend ideas and activate higher order thinking among students. Moreover, many teachers have not garnered the expertise to plan for rich student engagements via multiple modalities as evidenced by differentiation that involves students completing less of the same activity. As a result, teaching and learning across the school is uneven, which thwarts continuous increased achievement.

- Fortify the monitoring of teacher practice supported by the development of professional improvement plans, actionable feedback, and time-bound benchmarks in order to accelerate teacher and student outcomes. (4.1)
 - Formal observations of all teachers are the nexus of professional evaluation providing information on what both teachers and students are doing well and who requires assistance. In response, coaches work with teachers who need support by modeling and co-teaching lessons. Formative observations are done on an as need basis in response to information culled during instructional cabinet meetings or informal classroom visits. The assistant principal routinely observes teachers and provides written feedback based on the Danielson's Framework and student work. Nevertheless, there was no evidence of a formal school-wide calendar for observations or a schedule of short, frequent cycles of feedback support. Therefore, a system to monitor instructional practices for all faculty leading to professional advancement is not firmly in place. (4.1a)
 - The principal meets with the coaches to receive updates on teacher progress in order to determine next steps for improved practice and to identify any organizational or administrative decisions relating to unsatisfactory performance or retention. However, there was no evidence of teacher improvement plans for teachers in greatest need of professional assistance in order to accelerate their practice thereby improving outcomes for their students. Although there is a school-wide professional development plan that guides the instructional direction of the school, the absence of individual teacher improvement plans hinders professional growth and overall teacher effectiveness. (4.1b)

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Ryder Elementary School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score		X					
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed