

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Ralph Bunche

**Elementary School 125
425 West 123rd Street
New York
NY 10027**

Principal: Reginald Higgins

Dates of review: March 4 – 5, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Ralph Bunche is an elementary school with 190 students from prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 43% Black, 42% Hispanic, 4% White, 5% Asian, and 6% other students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 89.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School systems and partnerships support students in a safe environment where improving student outcomes are a high priority. (1.4)
 - After a review of the School Survey and incident reports revealed safety concerns, a school-based Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) system was created to foster the development of a positive school tone. The recently formed student government meets with the Prevention Coordinator to provide suggestions and feedback. Representatives reported that after they shared feedback noting that they wanted more “positive” celebrations, there is now an increase in student recognitions and awards that include both rewarding students’ academic and social achievements during school assemblies and celebrating them on hallway bulletin boards. As noted in the student meeting, the opportunity to provide feedback bolsters their self-esteem and leadership skills. Additionally, students are frequently recognized for their good deeds and their names are displayed on a “Caught Being Good” bulletin board. Additionally, the 4R’s (reading, writing, respect and resolution) curriculum that is used in kindergarten through grade 2 to support students’ social-emotional learning embeds conflict resolution skills within lessons. These efforts result in a reduction of the number of superintendent suspensions, while enabling students to value differences and learn in an inclusive environment that is conducive to their needs.
 - Students state that teachers “really care.” They appreciate that they can turn to school personnel who promptly address specific concerns. As a result, students and families indicate that the school’s small class sizes enable every student to be well known by school faculty who help support academic growth with tutoring and small group intervention strategies. Additionally, the attendance team frequently reviews attendance and guidance reports to note trends and areas of need. Outreach efforts result in phone calls and home visits. Data analysis informs plans for added supports from Columbia University’s Peace by Peace program, which provides conflict resolution training in grades 4 and 5, the Columbia Wind Ensemble for music instruction, and Asphalt Green, supporting swimming and water safety instruction for grades 2 to 5. These efforts presently result in a two percent increase in monthly attendance rates and increased motivational levels as noted in student and parent meetings.
- School leaders develop and share clearly articulated goals with the school community to support social-emotional growth and foster student learning. (3.1)
 - The principal’s performance objectives and school goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) focus on increasing student proficiency levels in English language arts and math and align with school level action plans. The principal and cabinet members plan for the school year by reviewing historical outcomes from State assessment data as well as the results of the School Survey and Progress Report. Cabinet members track goals on a bi-monthly basis leading to timely adjustments

that include the redesign of the afterschool targeted intervention periods on Tuesdays and Thursdays, made to address students' needs.

- The school's four-point plan to improve student outcomes was collaboratively developed by school members who help shape the school's goals. These goals, shared with teachers and families during staff and town hall meetings as well as Friday "coffee with the principal", enable the school community to be cognizant of and embrace the school's plan for student improvement. Teachers set professional goals for themselves and at the upper-grade level students are aware of their own broad learning goals and are encouraged to be accountable for their own learning. The staff has developed a list of struggling students as well as those requiring enrichment, resulting in targeted assistance during the school day. As such, there is a shared accountability and commitment to needed improvements relative to the increase in the number of students performing at proficiency levels.
- School leaders support teacher development through frequent observations and feedback cycles aligned to professional development with a focus on improving instructional practices throughout the school. (4.1)
 - As a first year member of the Teacher Effectiveness Pilot (TEP), school leaders use the Danielson framework to provide frequent, specific, and timely feedback to staff on seven focused competencies. A talent coach visits the school two to four times monthly to assist school leaders with implementation by supporting the accuracy and meaningfulness of feedback. The ARIS Talent Management dashboard is used to monitor and track feedback between school leaders and teachers as well as monitor the accomplishment of established goals. Based on teacher's needs, a differentiated plan of support is then created with follow up conversations aligned to areas for growth as well as individually determined professional goals. Lead teachers mentor colleagues and facilitate demonstration lessons and intervisitations. As a result, several newly assigned teachers continue to refine their pedagogical practices and exhibit understanding of grade appropriate strategies that elicit basic student understanding.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve instructional practices across classrooms to ensure that diverse learners are consistently provided with challenging tasks enabling them to demonstrate higher order thinking skills. (1.2)
 - Some teachers prepare lessons that target the specific needs and strengths of students and employ strategies that address a range of student ability levels. This however, is not the practice in every class; therefore, not all students receive the academic support necessary to accelerate their learning. Additionally, although students sit in groups, teachers do not always use formative data to make assignments or to develop appropriately challenging tasks. As such, most teachers do not yet plan lessons that allow for sufficient student engagement in higher order thinking. As a result, meaningful work products that demonstrate activities that stretch the thinking of all learners including English language learners, students with individual education plans, and those

performing at the highest achievement levels is not yet evident school wide.

- Teachers are beginning to employ open-ended questions to spark discussions and students in some classrooms are questioning each other's assumptions and ideas. For example in a fifth grade class students made connections to a previously read text, cited text to defend their answers, and built on each other's thoughts and ideas. However, this is not consistent. In many classrooms, questions and answers are most often between teacher and an individual student. Consequently, thought-provoking questions, conversations that give students the chance to support their views with evidence, change their minds and use questions as a way to learn more, are not yet the norm across classrooms and grades.
- Further refine the development of the curriculum to reflect alignment with key standards and Common Core learning tasks that increase rigor and cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
 - Although academic tasks at times emphasize higher order skills, activities are not consistently rigorous enough to challenge students performing at the varied ability levels. School leaders and staff embrace the support from consultants and network team members to help make changes to the curricula to integrate CCLS into English language arts and math units of study. Teacher teams continue to make further adjustments regarding the balance of informational and literary texts across a range of disciplines. Yet, in some classrooms, skills are taught in isolation and students do not sufficiently apply taught strategies to help them understand the text. As a result, texts are not always sequenced to build knowledge about specific topics and subjects, leading to tasks that are not adequately challenging for the grade, and resulting in an achievement gap across multiple classes and grade levels.
- Ensure consistent use of varied on-going assessment practices and analysis of student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level. (2.2)
 - Data tracking charts are displayed in classrooms and teachers use data from common grade level assessments including Acuity, Rally, and Fountas and Pinnel, to track student growth. Grade level teams are at the infancy stages of integrating the Common Core bundle in their units of study. During planning meetings, teachers were recently exposed to utilizing protocols to analyze student work products. Thus far, their approach is limited to identifying the needs of individual students. While some teachers track results, others do not yet systematically review the data on their tracking charts. As a result, all teachers are not consistently using the data to make needed changes to the curriculum, student groupings, and their instructional practices.
 - At the fifth grade level the math teacher pre-assesses students' understanding of each new unit and utilizes varied strategies and technological tools (such as Smart board clickers) to note students' ability to comprehend lessons and develop conceptual understanding. This level of checking for student understanding however is not the norm

across grades and classrooms. Additionally, although teachers repeatedly ask questions, many do not analyze student responses to check for understanding. This hinders their ability to make timely and effective adjustments so that students receive daily feedback and are able to master concepts and further their own learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Ralph Bunche	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