



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Ralph Bunche School

Elementary School M125

**425 West 123rd Street
Manhattan
NY 10027**

Principal: Reginald Higgins

**Date of review: March 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Sandra Litrico**

The School Context

The Ralph Bunche School is an elementary school with 222 students from grades pre-kindergarten to 5. The school population comprises 48% Black, 43% Hispanic, 02% White, 04% Asian students and 03% multi-cultural. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 38% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 89%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Additional Findings	Proficient
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

**3.4 High
Expectations**

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school leader effectively communicates high expectations to the entire school community and effectively partners with staff, parent and students to ensure students' educational learning experiences prepare them for the next level.

Impact

The school has a unified set of high expectations and has developed strong relationships with students and partnerships with families to support students' progress towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- All parents agreed that the school leader allows parents to be empowered. There is constant communication between parents and staff regarding student performance. Student progress reports, phone calls, and parent meetings provide families with information about students' progress in meeting classroom expectations and their overall progress. School leaders, lead teachers and the parent coordinator offer workshops to deepen parents' understanding of the English Arts and math curriculum, state assessments and common core expectations, and provide sessions related to college and career readiness. Parents engage in actual performance tasks and simulated assessments to acquire hands on experiences on what their child needs to accomplish to be successful and how they can support their child.
- Students said that there are high expectations for learning and that the tasks and projects they complete are high level and challenging. Each day they receive a clear message that states, "Believe in yourself and you will achieve." The principal knows each and every child by name and greets them each day. He promotes vocabulary development by teaching students a new word each day and encourages them to use it in their daily lives. He refers to all students as scholars and provides tips for families in his newsletter to ensure they are successful. The students are exposed to a wide variety of experiences through community based partnerships, trips, guest speakers, visual and performing arts programs, and sport events. The principal promotes the belief that, "scholars need to be provided time to explore their world and experience the joy of discovery".
- The principal and his instructional cabinet meet with teacher teams to discuss grade specific and school wide practices related to curriculum planning and instruction. This creates a culture of mutual accountability in meeting the schools expectations. In addition the principal communicates high expectations to the staff through morning meetings, principal newsletters, town hall meetings, faculty conferences, grade conferences professional collaborations and observation feedback sessions. The staff handbook clearly delineates school procedures, policies and expectations including professional responsibilities as outlined in the Danielson Framework for teaching.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms teacher practices provide strategies to serve as entry points for challenging tasks and student discussions.

Impact

Instructional strategies and scaffolds for students are consistent across classrooms, allowing students to access learning in a meaningful way. However, the development of high quality supports and extensions into the curricula to challenge high achieving students is still a work in progress.

Supporting Evidence

- There is evidence in all classrooms that the instructional focus of developing academic vocabulary is at the center of all lessons. Words are posted, referred to and used by students. During the 2nd grade reading lesson, the teacher introduced students to unfamiliar words in the text *Alexander Who used to be Rich Last Sunday* and asked students to elicit the meaning of words using context clues.
- To meet students' needs and provide multiple entry points into the curriculum teachers use scaffolding tools such as model drawing, graphic organizers, writing templates, visuals and manipulatives. Teachers also utilize the ReadyGen Scaffold Handbook and Go Math RTI which include a multiple of reading and math strategies for struggling students. The RAFT Strategy of Restating, Answer, Facts and Tie-up is also used across grades by all students to answer questions after reading a text as was evidenced in the special education class as students responded to questions on classifying organisms. Some teachers utilize the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model to scaffold instruction.
- Teachers pose questions and use the protocol of "Turn & Talk" and team talk to promote student conversations. Students use accountable talk as they agree, disagree and add on to each other's comments. This was evidenced as students in the fifth grade class had a text based discussion. The teacher posed several high level thinking questions including "How is Hiawatha asking Nokomis a question? What is her motive? Do you think Nokomis is annoyed by all the questions?" Students made inferences about the character's motives and feelings and engaged in rich discussion using text based evidence to support their responses. However, this was not the case in the vast majority of classrooms where there were missed opportunities to facilitate meaningful discussions.
- Across classrooms, student work products and tasks reflected high levels of student thinking. The first grade classroom had students engaged in higher order thinking tasks as they engaged in a STEM lesson on the creation stage of the engineering design process. The students had to create a problem and solve that problem by mimicking how animals use their body parts to survive.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty align curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and make purposeful decisions to build coherence and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula are refined using student data.

Impact

Planning for engagement and instructional coherence across the curricula using student data is consistent across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes common core aligned programs including ReadyGen literacy program and Go Math in grades kindergarten through grade 5. Teacher teams use these programs to create curriculum units that ensure coherent instruction across grades and meet the needs of all learners. Adjustments were made in the math curriculum to ensure all lessons focus on problem solving skills. The social studies and science curriculum are embedded into the units and are supplemented with Houghton Mifflin Social studies texts and FOSS science kits are also used as a resource for inquiry based learning. First grade is piloting the implementation of the Next Generation Science standards using STEM lessons.
- The writing curriculum is supplemented with additional teacher created mini lessons to ensure that students learn the writing process and have more opportunities to engage in writing across the curriculum in different genres. There is an emphasis on students using text based evidence in their writing to support their claims. Vocabulary development is incorporated in all units of study.
- Modifications for diverse learners including English Language Learners are included in the lesson plans. These include manipulatives, picture dictionaries, models, labeling and projects differentiated by student choice. There are also teacher supports including small group, and one on one conferencing. Extensions which allow students to make multiple connections are also included in some of the units.
- A review of unit plans indicates that the school integrates close reading, using text based evidence and incorporating vocabulary into its school wide curricula. All lessons include common core standards, essential questions, lesson objectives, text based vocabulary, small group instruction, and writing and discussion prompts. Student work and curricula demonstrate the integration of argumentative writing across content areas. The school's decision to integrate Universal Design for Learning and Understanding by Design provided a means for teachers to refine tasks in curricula.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School wide assessments, including rubrics, conferences, checks for understanding, and student self-assessment, are all related to the curricula and provide actionable feedback to support students understanding of content related materials.

Impact

The use of assessments leads to actionable next steps so that students know what they need to do to improve. Adjustments to units and lessons promote meeting all students' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use curricula-aligned assessments such as performance tasks, ReadyGen and Go Math Unit tests, Schoolnet Benchmark assessments, Rally Test Prep, Fountas & Pinnell running records as a source for actionable feedback regarding students' strengths and areas for improvement. Student work posted on bulletin boards and on folders includes rubrics, teacher feedback and common grading based on rubrics determine student progress toward subject s[specific benchmarks. Teacher's checklists and conference notes help identify who needs immediate attention with learning tasks during lessons.
- Teachers monitor progress of students within each lesson through checks for understanding including questioning, exit slips and conferencing. This is used to effectively group students and provide supports or extensions. This data also is used to adjust future lessons when necessary.
- An item analysis of the English Language Arts assessment results surfaced learning gaps in the comprehension of literature and identifying evidence to support central theme. Adjustments to curriculum and instruction included generating focused teaching points, balancing literature and informational tests and further engagement of students in reading and discussion using text based evidence across subjects.
- Assessment data is shared with students through individual teacher conferences, annotations on rubrics, feedback on student work, and during assessment review periods. Parents are also provided with information on needs, strengths and next steps on progress reports and during parent conferences and family curriculum events. Students were able to articulate their progress and next steps. One student said she was a level 2 in English language arts and she knew she needed to read closely, chunk the text and find the main idea of each section to improve her comprehension. Another student who wanted to improve his writing explained that according to his feedback he wrote a strong introduction and has good understanding of the text, but he needs to work on organization by logically grouping the information he presents.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teacher teams are engaged in teacher led structured inquiry based professional collaborations and there are opportunities for staff input into instructional decisions.

Impact

Instructional capacity has strengthened through the alignment of teacher collaborations with school goals. School wide structures and decisions to improve teacher practices and student learning are developed using teacher input.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are engaged on inquiry based professional learning teams at the grade and school wide level that provide them with the opportunity to meet collaboratively on a weekly basis. Protocols for the review of student work are embedded in the structure of team meetings. Teachers define and norm grade expectations adjust teaching strategies and identify scaffolds for targeted students.
- A vertical teacher team was created to strengthen curriculum units and teacher practice in order to meet the needs of targeted populations including students performing in the lowest third and above grade level. The team used data from Schoolnet and made adjustments to the curriculum including a focus on academic language and the use of rubrics in writing. Teachers also developed questioning and discussion techniques to promote student conversations.
- The focus of another teacher team observed was to diagnose several students who were English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities. The teachers identified their strengths and needs and instructional next steps. Most of the students struggled with text evidence. They made adjustments including developing writing lessons that teach how to gather information to support a claim. They also created a checklist for students based on the rubric.
- Teachers said that they were given a survey at the beginning of the year regarding professional development opportunities. As a result Generation Ready consultants were hired to support teachers through model lessons and professional development sessions designed to deepen instructional practices.