



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Ruby G. Allen Elementary School

Q148

**89-02 32nd Avenue
Queens
NY 11369**

Principal: Nancy Birson

**Date of review: December 8, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto**

The School Context

The Ruby G. Allen is an elementary school with 1041 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 83% Hispanic, 3% White, 12% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 31% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.0%.

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	Additional Findings	Developing
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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

Teachers benefit from participating in professional collaboration that fosters reflection as well as provide options for researching effective instructional techniques that focus on improved student achievement.

Impact

This work has resulted in cohesive planning, coherence and consistency across grades throughout the school as well as building a reflective collaborative community that focuses on improved student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers received professional development on the establishment of norms, roles and the justification for protocols as a solid foundation to teacher teams. They are utilizing agendas as a means to planning and preparing high-impact meetings.
- Teacher teams recognize the importance of data in analyzing student strengths and needs. The second grade team looked at student writing. After analyzing the writing pieces using the positive protocol, they created graphic organizers to support students.
- Teacher teams plan and implement instructional strategies based on student performance. For example, the fifth grade team reviewed student work and revised the unit of study on finding courage. They looked closely at how student work evaluated the author's use of multiple perspectives in a text.
- Teachers are taking the lead in various school committees, School Professional Development Committee, English Language Learners committee and Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies committee. These result in distributive leadership as teachers take on facilitation, coaching roles.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teacher assessment practices do not consistently reflect effective feedback to students. The use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment within instructional periods to make immediate adjustments to lessons is not a fully embedded practice across the school.

Impact

Assessment practices do not consistently result in instructional adjustments and next learning steps to improve student outcomes are not always evident.

Supporting Evidence

- Summative assessments at the end of modules in English language arts are “on-demand” assessments of what students can accomplish without scaffolding or teacher support, where indicated by the standards. Teachers post sticky notes on published pieces, and in some student portfolios, with next steps based on rubrics.
- Formative and end of unit tests in mathematics are utilized to provide additional support through practice in a skill or strategy. These do not yet consistently yield actionable feedback for students. Teacher lesson plans do not consistently reflect student assessment results. Student work in some classes merely indicated a grade for the student.
- Checks for understanding are evident in many classrooms: scaffolding questions from basic to complex; the use of whiteboards; do now’s, thumb-o-meters; and exit slips. However, there is inconsistent use of these checks for understanding in adjustment of lessons.
- Students self-assess in some classrooms based on pre-determined assessment criteria. In one classroom, students utilized color cards to indicate their levels of understanding in a mathematics task.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school aligns instruction and adjusts the Common Core curriculum so that a diversity of learners has access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

Impact

The needs of the diverse population are targeted to create instructional coherence and college and career readiness across grade levels and content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers incorporate into English Language Arts units, components of balanced literacy such as read-aloud, shared reading, shared and interactive writing as they target lesson goals of ELA and literacy in the content areas.
- Units of study include several lessons that require focused, text-based reading where teachers' model and students practice reading closely to determine what the text says explicitly. This was noted in a 5th grade lesson plan through the strategy of the Question Formulation Technique. The teacher provided a focus; students were required to brainstorm questions and engage in discussion around a couple open-ended questions.
- Teachers are approaching the teaching of mathematics through the lens of the individual math development of their own students and common misconceptions. Meaningful instructional tasks and generalizable strategies are incorporated into lesson plans. For example, problem solving strategies are embedded in, referred to and utilized in one third grade Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) class as students solved multi-step word problems.
- In English Language Arts, classes use discipline specific rubrics, including performance descriptors for four levels of proficiency. A score of 3 indicates that by the end of the unit, a student has demonstrated solid evidence of success with the elements of the task or concept and can perform independently when required by the standards. In classrooms, summative performance based tasks were maintained in student growth portfolios for reference in determining student understanding on key skills.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The use of strategic teaching strategies that embed multiple entry points in the curriculum for all learners and foster deep reasoning in student work products is not yet evident across the school.

Impact

Lessons do not always challenge all students, particularly high performers, to their full potential, thus limiting opportunities for them to engage in higher order thinking tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- In four out of the seven classrooms visited, teachers provide collaborative tasks and students worked together. They tailored tasks to students' proficiency levels, expecting different products from students with different levels of proficiency. In a third grade classroom, students requiring extra assistance worked in a small group with the teacher as she helped scaffold a task. Other students worked independently and in pairs to solve rigorous tasks under the same standard.
- Teachers are beginning to introduce vocabulary to students in context gradually, scaffolding their use by making them visible on bulletin boards to everyone. Student work products in some classes are designed to engage students in academic word play. Cognates were displayed on a bulletin board in a second grade bilingual class as students accessed the English language words.
- Some teachers are designing language lessons. The teacher in an English as a Second Language (ESL) self-contained classroom chose "juicy sentences". These sentences were chosen as part of a complex text that contained main and dangling clauses, parts, and phrases. Instructional conversations that followed, helped students uncover how the sentence unfolded, how to unpack meaning, and ultimately how to map meaning back to the text.
- Teachers translate standards into "I can" learning targets with students at the beginning of lessons in order to define what they are learning and why they are learning it. These are posted in some classes, but not always referred to throughout the lesson.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders disseminate information, collect data, communicate high expectations and provide many supports for these expectations to be met.

Impact

This results in increased opportunities to communicate expectations for professionalism, instruction and pedagogy across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Weekly updates and information from the principal highlight the big ideas of the Common Core standards, offer recommendations on professional texts, articles and websites that advance the conversation on the instructional shifts of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- The school has enlisted the assistance of a Teacher Development coach in developing cycles of instruction focusing on two identified areas of need from teacher evaluations – questioning and discussion and designing coherent instruction.
- The school is engaged in a multi-year collaboration with the NYS Department of Education and the American Institutes for Research in order to build upon the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), Universal Design for Learning and the planning of rigorous learning experiences through a strategic Response to Intervention framework
- The school has provided opportunities for parents to tour the school and visit classrooms to observe teaching and learning first-hand. Parents are also given the opportunity to follow-up these visits with the classroom teacher during parent engagement timeframes, where they can learn about their children’s progress towards learning goals and other school expectations.
- Parent workshops address topics such as CCLS, the instructional shifts and Helping Your English language learner child learn English. In addition, speech teachers and pre-kindergarten teachers conduct parent workshops on read-alouds and phonetic awareness strategies.