



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Ryder Elementary School**

**Elementary K114**

**1077 Remsen Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11236**

**Principal: Darwin Smith**

**Date of review: February 11, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Renee Peart-Zachary**

## The School Context

Ryder is an elementary school with 615 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 83% Black, 8% Hispanic, 6% White, 1% Asian, 1% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders and 1% Multi-Racial students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The majority of teachers engage in inquiry-based professional collaborations that endorse the school goals, Common Core Learning Standards, and the instructional shifts. Leadership structures are in place so that teachers contribute to instructional outcomes.

### Impact

Teacher team collaborations result in teachers sharing instructional ideas that strengthen their instructional capacity. Teachers have input in school-wide key decisions that affect student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet in grade-level meetings three times a week and in vertical teams twice a week. During these professional collaborations teachers review student assessment results, the school's instructional focus, units of study, lesson plans, and share ideas to implement in their lesson plans. For example, a fourth grade teacher team was observed reviewing the English Language Arts (ELA) baseline, and endline assessment results and fourth and fifth grade ELA standards. Teachers determined that students struggled with summarizing in their short response answers. Teachers discussed different strategies such as modeling, chunking text, and reviewing additional vocabulary terms, that they would implement in forthcoming lessons.
- Teachers create weekly ELA and math baseline and endline assessments that are implemented school-wide. Furthermore, teachers reported that they are comfortable bringing their instructional ideas to school leaders. For example, a teacher researched resources to support students in understanding the theme of a story that is now used across the school. Teachers use the Title, How, Emotions, Mood and Enduring (THEME) approach to help students discover the theme of a story and students must answer five questions connected to the theme: What is the significance of the title? How does the main character change? What emotions did you feel at the end? What was the mood of the story? What message from the story applies to life?
- During teacher team meetings, teachers are required to discuss and document how the work of the team promotes the school's instructional focus and what supports are needed to continue student progress. Immediately following the team meetings, all agendas are submitted to the principal. A review of teacher team agendas and minutes indicate that during weekly professional collaborations, teachers align their teams work to the school's instructional focus. For example, a fourth grade math team identified how students apply various strategies to solve multiplication problems. Teachers planned to revisit math skills of distributive property, partial product, and regrouping. This aligns to the school's instructional focus of increasing students' comprehension and interpretation skills.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Teaching practices are becoming aligned to a shared set of beliefs connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Student discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

Teaching practices are not yet resulting in consistent high quality student work products, high-level student discussions in classrooms, and improved student academic progress across all subject areas.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders reported that teachers use Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge to provide students with high-level questions and there is a school-wide emphasis to increase student discussions. However, high levels of student discussions were not consistently observed across classrooms. For example, in a grade 5 math class, students discussed backwards problem solving strategies with their peers as they solved multi-step math problems. However, in a grade 2 ELA class, where students were asked to read a non-fiction text they were not provided with clear tasks, and although students were in groups, student discussions about the non-fiction text were not evidenced.
- School leaders reported that there is a shared belief that students learn best through increasing students' ability to comprehend, interpret, and transfer information and skills across texts and subject areas. This shared belief was not consistently observed across classrooms. For example, in a grade 4 ELA class, students were strategically placed in groups based on recent ELA data from the baseline assessments and they worked on differentiated writing tasks while the teacher asked high-level questions to push learners' thinking. Students discussed and interpreted the author's purpose and described the setting. Students were asked to jot down their interpretation in their writing notebooks and complete a graphic organizer. However, in another grade 2 ELA class, students were in groups and worked independently to look at a diagram and write down facts about the diagram. The tier 1 group was asked to write four facts, tier 2 group was asked to write three facts, and tier 3 group was asked to write two facts. Students were observed copying facts from the non-fiction books. Student work products did not show a deep understanding of the facts.
- High-level student discussions were not consistently observed across classrooms. In a grade 4 math class, students with their partners discussed division word problems. However, in a grade 3 math class students sat in groups but worked independently with limited peer discussions.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and teachers adopt and adapt curricula that align to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and are refined using student work and data.

### Impact

The school's curricular decisions promote college and career readiness and provide all students with opportunities to increase higher-order skills. All learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities have access to cognitively engaging tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has selected Expeditionary Learning and Core Knowledge for ELA, Harcourt Go Math!, and the New York Scope and Sequence for science and social studies. Teachers supplement the curricula with college and career aligned resources from Engage NY. Curricula integrate all the instructional shifts. The school has a specific concentration on text-based answers across content areas. Teachers use a unit plan template to plan lessons that include essential questions, Common Core Learning Standards, unit goals, instructional shifts, skills, vocabulary, anchor texts, assessments, teaching points, and differentiated learning activities.
- Units of study include tasks that promote higher-order skills. A review of forthcoming unit plans revealed academic tasks accentuate rigorous habits. For example, in a grade 5 ELA unit, students must predict, synthesize, infer information, and make a connection to identify what is being inferred in the novels *Iggie's House* by Judy Blume and *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan. In a grade 4 math unit, students worked on tasks where they deepen their understanding of place value and properties of operation to solve multi-step division problems. Students solved math problems that are connected to the real world and explain their problem solving process using math vocabulary.
- Teacher teams meet weekly to review and refine units of study based on outcomes on student work products and assessments. Teachers provide each other with feedback on adjusted units of study. A review of unit plans across subject areas included adjustments to support all students, including ELLs and students with disability. For example, the teachers reviewed grade Fountas and Pinell data, endline assessments, and student work products and noticed second grade students struggled with main idea skills. Teachers adjusted ELA units of study and lessons to include chunking text, annotating text, and changing teacher questions, to include more main idea and inferencing questions. This adjustment provided access to the ELA unit for all students.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### **Findings**

Teachers use and create assessments, include rubrics in lessons, and provide limited feedback to students. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding, and opportunities for students to self-assess their work varies.

### **Impact**

Learners are not fully aware of their next learning steps and consistent improved student progress is hindered.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers use Fontas and Pinell assessments and create baseline and endline assessments. The ELA and math baseline and endline assessments include multiple choice questions and short response questions. Teachers meet weekly to score assessments using a rubric from sources such as Engage NY, yet some students do not always receive consistent actionable feedback on their assessments and other work products. A review of the assessments in student portfolios revealed some teachers give comments to short response answers such as "I see you are having difficulty multiplying two digit numbers. Next step, review our problem solving strategies and basic multiplication facts" while other students receive a score or a just a check for completion of the task.
- The principal reported that while teachers are required to check for understanding through various ways, including teacher questions to students while they are in small groups and then provide them with immediate feedback via, conferencing with note taking, and exit slips, this was not evidenced across classrooms visited. Some teachers circulated but took no notes and gave students feedback on procedures rather than on skills and content, and some teachers took conference notes and conducted a midpoint check based on findings. For example, in a grade 3 math class, the teacher walked around the class and encouraged students to work with their groups rather than independently. The teacher conducted a midpoint check with no adjustment to the lesson. The teacher said, "How are you doing? I should see you working together, so try to work with your partners." The teacher had not asked questions to assess students' understanding of the content. In a grade 5 Integrated Co-Teaching ELA class, the teachers circulated the class and asked questions to assess students' understanding on the themes of tolerance and acceptance. In a grade 4 ELA class, the teacher took conference notes on students' struggles in adding details to the graphic organizer about the setting of the story. She discussed the data captured with small groups of students.
- Across classrooms visited, most students were not given opportunities to self-assess their work with the use of a rubric or age-appropriate checklist. In one out of seven classes visited, students self-assessed their work using a rubric. Students reported that rubrics are not always used across subjects. One student said, "Sometimes my teachers give me rubrics mainly for ELA." Another student said, "We use rubrics in some subjects but definitely not in social studies".

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate to staff high expectations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Furthermore, school leaders and staff consistently communicate to both students and families high expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness and provide families with information relative to their children’s academic performance and progress.

**Impact**

School leaders have a system for holding staff accountable; thus, staff are fully aware of school-wide instructional expectations. Families fully understand student progress and curricular expectations.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Parents attend monthly workshops on topics such as attendance, enhancing reading and writing skills, resume writing, Common Core Learning Standards, and expectations on New York State exams. Parents volunteer to participate in the Mystery Reading Program that allows them to conduct a read-aloud to a class. When parents conduct these read-alouds, they receive additional information about the ELA Common Core Learning Standards.
- Parents reported that they receive weekly, differentiated homework sheets that outline homework, topics covered in class, and curricula expectations. Additionally, progress reports are distributed three times a year, Class Dojo provides an online behavior system, and school curricula letters, teacher phone calls, and emails, keep parents informed about curricula expectations and support them in helping their children make academic progress.
- The principal uses faculty conferences to inform staff on the school’s focus on Danielson Framework Component 3D: Using assessments. Furthermore, the principal documents expectations in memoranda that outline instructional non-negotiables and provides action plans for selected teachers so that they know next steps. Additionally, school leaders hold staff accountable through observations resulting in teachers receiving verbal and written feedback, collecting teacher team agendas weekly, collecting unit plans, and conducting data discussions with teachers on baseline and endline assessment results.