

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Rachel Carson High School of Coastal Studies

K344

**521 West Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11224**

Principal: Edward Wilensky

Dates of review: February 9-10, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Isabel DiMola

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Rachel Carson High School of Coastal Studies has 430 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26.9% Black, 28.8% Hispanic, 32.8% White, and 11.2% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 41.9% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58.1%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007-2008 was 84.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 70.4% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school is a small, safe high school that is looking forward to its first graduating class in June 2009. The entire school community shares a common vision of building the premier high school for coastal studies in New York. To that end, the school has developed effective partnerships with the New York Aquarium, Kingsborough Community College, ACRES Program and Trout in Classroom to support the marine biology and environmental issues focus of the school.

The school uses a wide range of data to understand where students are succeeding and where students are facing challenges, and strategically uses this broad data to organize and program the school each term. The principal supports the use of technology in instruction and uses resources effectively to provide teachers with technological resources and training to incorporate technology into daily instruction. Teachers work collaboratively with each other to build their pedagogical practice and appreciate the administration's support in their professional growth. Parents and students trust and respect the school administration and faculty, acknowledging that students' accomplishments are due to the instructional program and genuine concern of all school members with regard to student success. The school has developed a longitudinal tracking system that gives parents a comprehensive progress report, showing student progress with grade of entry through grade of exit. Since the last review, the school has made some progress in how it analyzes and uses data by subgroups and cohorts in developing the instructional program. However, there are currently no systems in place to set individual student goals and learning targets. The school is beginning to develop processes for regular assessment in core subject areas, but has not yet begun to use data to set measurable interim goals for individual and groups of students. There is no school-wide process to use data effectively to evaluate and modify instructional strategies to support students in meeting goals.

Teachers are just beginning to collect and analyze student data to inform instruction. Class visits evidence limited implementation of differentiated teaching strategies and this practice is not yet apparent or consistent across all grades and content areas. The school has not yet begun to use, regularly monitor and revise student specific goals with benchmarks over time. The principal understands the need for professional development for all members of the school community in the areas of data driven instruction and classroom differentiation and is in the process of developing plans to institute a comprehensive professional development plan that addresses these areas of concern.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty collect and analyze a wide range of data to understand school success and areas in need of improvement.
- School leaders and faculty work collaboratively with the School Leadership Team to develop the Comprehensive Educational Plan.
- Teachers work collaboratively to develop standards based curriculum in most subjects.
- Students and parents speak positively of the school's support regarding college readiness.
- School leaders and faculty have a clear vision of developing Rachel Carson High School of Coastal Studies into the premier school for coastal studies.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve communication between school, students and families in order to enable a greater understanding of next learning steps.
- Develop goals and interim benchmarks for individual students, groups of students and content areas classes.
- Extend the use of data to support differentiated planning and instruction that meets the needs of individual and groups of students.
- Develop individual teacher professional development plans aligned to individual teacher pedagogical needs as well as to school goals and student outcomes.
- Ensure that all school plans have interim goals and periodic measures of success.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school collects a wide range of data from all core subject areas and for attendance. Administration disaggregates data by grade, class, cohort and student subgroups. This gives all faculty members an accurate understanding of student strengths and weaknesses. Administration and teachers use a school created database to record and analyze class and individual student data. Teachers have flash drives that store student data, enabling quick and easy access. Most teachers use Grade Pro to monitor student outcomes. Administration and faculty use ARIS to gauge an understanding of individual student academic and attendance history. Administration analyzes data to look at trends in student performance by subject area class from year to year. There is some data available to see the progress of some sub-groups; English Language Learners and gender, however, the school does not track data systematically and is limited to subject overviews at the conclusion of marking periods and semesters. Teachers meet with administration twice a month to look at student outcomes. This process identifies students that are in need of interventions that are available after-school and on Saturdays. However, the analysis of student outcomes is not in enough depth to inform strategic groupings of students and to develop strategies that address individual student needs.

The school communicates student progress to parents and students through report cards, progress reports and conversations with guidance counselors. A recently developed comprehensive progress report details student progress longitudinally. This has resulted in parents and students being able to monitor progress toward graduation. However, individual student goals and learning targets are not developed and communicated to parents and students. Procedures are in place to take attendance twice a day and there is immediate contact with parents of absentees through use of an automated phone system. School personnel use this contact as an opportunity to discuss not only the importance of daily attendance but to review student progress with parents. The use of the automated phone system has increased verbal communication between parents and school administrators and guidance counselors. However, despite careful tracking and communication with parents attendance is still an area of concern.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal, administrative team and faculty develop school-wide goals in all core subject areas based upon past success rates, formative and summative assessments. Teachers use common planning time to set grade goals. There is no process in place for

the use of assessments as a tool toward creating individual student goals. Although some individual teachers set student goals, they are broad, content-based goals. The school has yet to develop a system whereby individual student data is the basis of creating individual long-term goals and developing interim learning targets. The linkage of data analysis and instruction is not yet apparent in most classrooms. Some teachers use data such as reading levels to group students and differentiate materials and work product, however, school-wide use of data driven instruction is not yet developed.

The principal, administrative team, teachers, guidance counselors, staff and parent members of the School Leadership Team worked collaboratively on the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The principal and his administrative team created a draft version of the document and gave it to the various constituencies for their review and feedback, resulting in various revisions until a final product developed. Parents expressed satisfaction at the level of input they had in creating the document.

Teachers use class contracts to communicate class goals and expectations to parents and students. Some subject area contracts are extremely explicit with regard to course content, learning goals and work product expectations. However, there is no consistent format for student contracts and they do not reflect individual student learning goals or interim learning targets. Students identified for remediation by teachers and the administration receive intervention from guidance counselors and attend after-school or Saturday tutoring programs. However, the value of the intervention is difficult to measure as there is no common recording format to track individual student progress at various intervals. Unsuccessful students are on academic probation. Teachers complete a work/conduct sheet daily that measures several aspects of student performance in class on a scale of A-F. These students meet regularly with their guidance counselor for further support. However, the information on the work/conduct sheets is limited as there is no rubric aligned to the measurements of class performance. This strategy is newly developed and its value has yet to be determined.

Leaders and teachers communicate high expectations to students and parents although they have not yet begun framing conversations around goals setting and the time-periods needed to achieve learning goals. School leaders and faculty make good use of School Messenger, an automated telephone system to remind parents of meetings, testing dates and other important information. School leadership makes every effort to accommodate parents and is available for conferences before and after-school and during evening hours. The school is creative in fostering parent involvement and holds well attended parent events at community institutions such as the New York Aquarium.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The principal and administration use a wide range of data to inform organizational decisions. Incoming grade 9 student reading and math levels are used to program students. Students that have scores below grade level in reading and math attend double periods of English language arts and math daily. The administration reviews data and determines programming for students in advanced classes, general education classes and collaborative team teaching classes. Standards based curriculum exists for every core subject area. Teachers, with assistance from AUSSIE consultants, are

beginning to develop curriculum maps for every core course. Currently, the curriculum maps are horizontal maps of content standards, but are a work in progress toward vertical and skills based mapping. Most classrooms display state standards with aligned student work. Constructive feedback to student work is inconsistent, with some teachers giving helpful advice and a grade aligned to a posted rubric and other teachers writing “good” or “very good” with no indication of why they received the grade or advice on how to improve. The principal, administrative team and teachers have developed new courses in technology, film history, music and sports media that broaden the scope of elective classes beyond those with a coastal studies theme. This has resulted in an increased level of student interest in school.

Administration meets one on one with teachers to identify why some students are not achieving. Assistant principals review item analysis of assessments with teachers to help understand the outcomes. Students in need of assistance attend lunchtime, after-school and Saturday tutoring. They meet regularly with their guidance counselor for additional support. English language learner and special education teachers and some general education teachers use assessment data to inform grouping. However, the consistent use of data by teachers in all grades and subject areas to strategically group students as a component of their daily planning and teaching is not yet developed. AUSSIE consultants have started working with individual and groups of teachers to develop effective practices in differentiating instruction based upon data.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

Teachers are extremely collegial and collaborative and appreciate the support that exists among colleagues. Teachers also appreciate feedback from administration following formal and informal observations as well as the administration supporting inter-visitation of colleague classrooms both within the school and at other schools. The principal and his administrative team have set up a professional development plan based upon teacher observations. New teachers work with mentors. Each teacher chooses professional development opportunities from a generic menu of offerings within the school or through the Department of Education or their school support organization. AUSSIE consultants provide on site professional development to teachers. Teachers do not set individual professional goals and have not developed individual professional development plans. It is therefore difficult to measure the impact of professional development on individual teacher pedagogical growth.

The Inquiry Team focuses on a class of low achieving ninth grade students. The team is at the beginning of its work in analyzing and evaluating baseline assessment data to determine individual student needs. Team members are working collaboratively as they begin to use the data to develop individual student goals and baseline learning targets. Each team member works with a sub-group of content area teachers to develop strategies to affect student learning. As a result, teachers are beginning to reflect upon their practice to measure the effectiveness of instructional strategies.

Administration, teachers, students and parents acknowledge an atmosphere of mutual respect among all constituencies. All groups appreciate the small size of the school and articulate that as one of the factors that allows students and families to receive the services they need. The principal hired a part time consultant to offer college readiness

preparation. Parents and students credit the schools' efforts at college advisement with the positive outcomes they have had in the college application process. The school has an effective partnership with the New York Aquarium and Kingsborough Community College to support its theme of coastal studies. The principal acknowledges that most collaboration with outside organizations relates directly to coastal studies. The school is actively working to strengthen relationships with other community organizations that provide youth development and support services beyond the capacity of the school.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.

All members of the school community share the vision of the school to grow into the premier coastal studies school in New York. The teachers and administrative team are dedicated to supporting student academic needs and their personal and professional growth. As a result, this school has developed a culture of collaboration and high expectations.

Administration acknowledges that the use of measurable goals and interim benchmarks is in the beginning stages. Although the administration sets school-wide goals, there is no mechanism to monitor action plans to measure progress and revise strategy where necessary. Course goals align to school-wide goals and content standards. However, there is no school-wide structure in place to record, track and monitor course goals. At the end of marking periods, administration reviews scholarship data and meets with individual teachers; however, no action plans or revised goals are set based upon the data reviewed at these meeting. The school has not developed a plan for student goal setting with interim benchmarks.

Administration and faculty review data at the end of each marking period and semester to get an overall sense of how students are performing in content area classes. Teachers of English Language Arts and math use Acuity as a baseline assessment and are at the beginning stages of using interim assessments to measure student progress. Science and social studies teachers use self-created or old Regents exams to get a baseline assessment at the beginning of the school year and are in the process of giving a mid-year assessment to determine student progress. AUSSIE consultants are working with teachers to use the data they gather to develop strategies for effective instruction. However, school- wide systems are not in place for monitoring assessment results and teachers are not effectively using the data they accumulate through assessment to inform lessons and differentiate instruction.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Rachel Carson High School of Coastal Studies	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?		X		
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?	X			
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?		X		
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X		

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DY0, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?	X			
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?		X		
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?		X		
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X		

Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed