

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

The Gravesend School

Elementary – Middle School 95

**345 Van Sicklen Street
Brooklyn
NY 11223**

Principal: Carolyn Telesmanich

**Dates of review: December 7 - 8, 2009
Lead Reviewer: Ann Marie Lettieri-Baker**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Gravesend School is an elementary-middle school with 1013 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 9% Black, 35% Hispanic, 27% White, and 28% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 94.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The Gravesend School is an elementary-middle school where students are interested in their learning and are motivated to do well. Students representing several grade levels discussed their respect for their teachers. They appreciate the fact that teachers work very closely with them to craft, understand and articulate their improvement goals in English language arts, writing and math. Additionally, students use unit-specific rubrics to self-monitor their progress over time. Regular goal setting and the systemic use of rubrics enable students to develop responsibility for their own ongoing academic development. Aligned to goal setting for all students is the school's practice of sharing student progress with parents and guardians three times a year through the distribution of progress reports. These reports are customized by grade level and provide families with information concerning their child's academic struggles and needs and how they can best support their youngsters at home.

While teachers use rubrics to evaluate student work and regularly meet to analyze assessment results, differentiated instructional practices were not evident across the school. Small group instructional designs are predominately student-led with little support provided to targeted learners by their teachers. Additionally, materials used are not differentiated to reflect the needs of lower or higher attaining students.

The school's overall improvement goals for subgroups of struggling students including English language learners and students with special needs are reflected in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan. School resources and allocations are used to support the improvement goals for these targeted populations. This is achieved through the provision of specialized after-school support, academic intervention push-in services during the school day and for the purchase of specialized programs that produce summative data of student progress on a regular basis. The improvement goals articulated in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan are aligned to the performance goals of all teachers on each grade level, setting the expectation of academic improvement for sub groups of low achieving students.

Teachers receive monthly professional development training aligned to the school's overall improvement foci as represented in the Comprehensive Education Plan. Differentiated support for teachers, however, is not yet in place and teachers are not included in the decision-making forums for the crafting of the professional development calendar.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The use of resources is aligned to the school's instructional goals, enabling the school to provide after-school and weekend support services to English language learners and other populations of identified struggling students.
 - Contracts for Excellence and Title III funds are effectively used to support the needs of English language learners and students with special needs. In addition to push-in academic intervention services, these students receive specialized, small group instruction during the school's extended day program. All additional services provided to these subgroups of students have resulted in a decline in the school's overall referral rate to special education and a rise in achievement scores on the New York State English language arts assessment.
 - Title I funds are being used to support the professional development of the staff well, with a focus on strategies to support English language learners. Special education teachers also participate in these professional development opportunities. The professional focus on strategy teaching has resulted in the improved ability of academic intervention specialists to work with subgroups of students in their regular classrooms to provide focused academic support aligned to the curriculum.
- School leaders and faculty enable parents and guardians to help their children by providing families with regular information regarding student progress, including information on strengths, weaknesses and next learning steps.
 - Teachers prepare detailed reports of their students' progress three times during the course of the school year. There are distributed to parents between each formal marking period and report card distribution, and are discussed at parent forum meetings. Parents feel greatly supported and informed by the school, as a result of this practice and understand not only what their children are struggling with, but also how to help them at home.
 - The Principal and cabinet review students' progress reports before they are distributed to parents. Copies of each child's progress report are then maintained by the administrative staff in grade-specific binders. The careful monitoring of student progress has resulted in the selection of schoolwide common assessments in English language arts and mathematics as well as targeted assessments for English language learners. Assessment data is carefully analyzed by the administration and staff in order to design small-group and targeted instruction for struggling learners.
- The staff engage in productive and collaborative inquiry, led by a core team of peers, which is effectively leading to improved instructional practices.
 - The schedule includes two periods a month for teachers to engage in collaborative inquiry studies. At one such meeting, middle school teachers discussed how they can use an interdisciplinary approach in the area of mathematical problem solving in order for their students to develop reasonable and coherent extended responses to mathematical questions. This long-term practice goal resulted in the development of a formative assessment tool for teachers to use to evaluate students progress and which students will use to self-monitor their work.

- As a result of the professional learning supported by the collaborative inquiry work teachers engaged in, student improvement goals are crafted in tandem with the students in English language arts, math and writing. These goals are visited throughout a particular unit of study; are checked off once achieved and new goals set. Students also have opportunities to write personal improvement goals in addition to the performance goals written with their teachers. This system allows teachers to measure progress towards interim goals they have set for groups of and individual students.
- In addition to gathering and analyzing a wide range of formative and summative data, the school has also established good instructional rubrics used to guide students to self reflect and plan their next learning steps.
 - In English language arts, teachers examine the results of running records and Monitoring for Results data in order to set next learning targets for their students. In math, teachers examine end of unit assessments in addition to the results of Study Island assessments given to middle school students, again to determine the needs of their students. The analysis of summative and formative assessment data helps teachers at this school understand the effectiveness of their pedagogy and how to plan intervention and/or enrichment for their students.
 - Rubrics are used in all areas of the curriculum and are aligned to the curriculum maps. In addition, performance goals are aligned to each unit of study across all content areas. Students use rubrics to self-monitor their progress before a piece of work is published or a project is completed. Teachers use the rubrics, as well, to monitor progress over time and as a final evaluative tool. As a result, expectations are explicit from the beginning to the end of a particular unit of study.
- The school's Comprehensive Education Plan includes a short list of clear, focused school level goals and action plans which drive efforts to accelerate student learning as well as teachers' professional learning.
 - The goals in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan are aligned to the principal's goals and objectives as well as to teachers' professional goals. The principal describes the goals of the Comprehensive Education Plan as "the why of the why." As a result, all stakeholders in the school are aware of the improvement expectations and are working toward achieving those long-term results.
- Students are interested in their learning and want to succeed resulting in high levels of student engagement, because their academic and emotional needs are consistently met by their teachers at all times.
 - Students at this school feel respected by their teachers and say that their social and emotional as well as their academic needs are being met. Because students feel secure and that they receive the help that they need, they are attentive and invested in their learning resulting in high levels of engagement and participation across the school.

Areas for Improvement

- Provide differentiated professional support to teachers, based on observations and recommendations made by administrators, and aligned to teachers' specific developmental and content knowledge needs.
 - Informal observation is used to provide teachers with feedback concerning their practice. Assistant Principals provide this feedback through e-mail

correspondence. Follow-up to progress made aligned to suggestions provided through those e-mails was not evident.

- Teachers receive generic professional development opportunities provided to the entire staff at monthly professional development sessions. While these sessions are aligned to the school's goals, there is no structure in place to meet the unique improvement of performance needs of individual teachers.
- Ensure that students have multiple entry points to achieve their academic goals by refining teaching strategies and classroom routines that are differentiated for both low-performing as well as high-attaining students.
 - While teachers are meeting regularly to examine the results of summative and formative assessments in order to plan targeted instructional strategies, there was little evidence of differentiation in the classrooms observed. Small group work was predominately student-led in the middle school classrooms and the materials used were the same from group to group or were being rotated between groups.
 - Teachers do not ensure that their thorough analysis of student data leads to differentiated classroom routines that allow for multiple entry points in order to support and extend the learning for all students.
- Establish consistent procedures that enable teachers and parents to be engaged in school decision-making which will result in a shared commitment to the school's high expectations and goals.
 - Parents and teachers state that they have limited involvement in the development of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan or other decision-making policy documents. Teachers, in particular, feel that the administration of the school does not include them in decisions regarding professional development, which is formulated by the principal and not in consultation with the teachers themselves. Both have resulted in the mistrust of the Principal.
 - The establishment of a shared commitment to the school's high expectations and goals is limited by the administration not consistently engaging parents and faculty in school decision making.
- Expand relationships with external partnerships and community-based organizations to provide child and youth development services for students and families in need, to help overcome their children's social emotional or behavioral problems.
 - The school-student support structure includes three counselors and only one of them is full-time at the school. They work with students who are mandated and at-risk for counseling services. The assistant principals are in charge of the application process for the articulation of fifth and eighth grade students to middle and high school. Parents do not have opportunities secure professional support for the social or emotional needs of their children beyond what the school is able to provide during the school day.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The Gravesend School	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, 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, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching 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				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed