

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

The General D. Chappie James Elementary School

Elementary School K631

76 Riverdale Avenue

Brooklyn

NY 11212

Principal: Margaret V. McAuley

Dates of review: November 19-20, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Lori Bennett

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The General D. Chappie James is an elementary school with 461 students from pre-kindergarten through grade six. The school population comprises 83% Black, 12% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The General D. Chappie James is a newly designed elementary school as of September 2008. The new principal and administrative team has made great strides in reorganizing the school and academic programs for the benefit of teachers and students. Parents speak highly of the new staff and administration and acknowledge the substantive improvements made because of the redesign, yet acknowledge that there are still areas that need improvement, specifically citing the rigor of instruction. Classrooms are inviting and show evidence of caring and concerned teachers. Prominently displayed student work in hallways and classrooms evidence teachers commentary aimed to provide students with feedback to improve academic assignments.

The school is a welcoming and calm environment reorganized around grade-level teams. Staff, students and families feel supported by the many changes in scheduling and staffing that the administration has put in place. Parents report that they have been participating in a variety of workshops and are enthusiastic about the timely information provided to keep them informed about the progress of their children. They praise the parent coordinator and note a marked improvement in home-school communications.

Teachers work collaboratively in grade-level teams using data systems such as ARIS and Acuity to glean information for instructional planning and to develop effective strategies to improve learning outcomes for individual students and targeted subgroups. The focus of teacher inquiry teams is to examine and utilize formative and summative data to render intervention and enrichment supports to all students. Efforts are underway to provide staff with professional development around differentiated instruction in order to more effectively support individual and small group outcomes in the classroom. Teacher study groups at every grade level currently support this endeavor.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is committed to creating a supportive environment where all students and staff are successful.
 - The principal and staff encourage high expectations and students respond by continuing to strive for excellence. The principal's vision for the school's development gives it a clear sense of direction and the staff and school community are committed to achieving school goals. Comprehensive school-wide planning and consistent communication among all constituents promote continuous improvement in all areas of school life. Parents report significant improvements in home-school communications as well as in the overall school tone.
 - The redesigned school is a safe place for students to learn and they appreciate the high level of support they receive from the administration and the faculty. Family Day celebrations focus on the school's growing shelter population, which offer a variety of after school activities such as, violin and drama as part of the expanded curricular. Enrichment and tutorial supports come from external partners such as, Educators for Social Responsibility and Spirituality for Children, which offer support to ensure that students develop personally and academically.
- Strategic organizational, budgetary, staffing and scheduling decisions have been made to address the needs of the school and underpin school improvement plans very effectively.
 - Creative programming affords all teachers opportunities to interact with their peers through weekly common planning periods for grade level teams and an additional planning period affords time to specifically work with the school's data specialist. The consistent frequency of these sessions enables teachers to accomplish the majority of essential tasks, including detailed conversations about the data, achievement of specific students, interdisciplinary unit planning, and new teacher mentoring.
 - The school uses its resources effectively to support the goal for student achievement. Through a comprehensive data analysis and the identification of staffing needs, two additional academic intervention teachers were hired to support struggling students. Consequently, students receive additional academic support and enrichment before, during and after school.
- Professional development opportunities are provided to staff members in order to foster continuous growth in classroom practice and to improve student outcomes.
 - The staff members are provided opportunities to share and develop their professional knowledge with each other through peer-to-peer classroom visitations and grade level meetings focused on developing balanced literacy strategies. Teachers are focus their professional learning on Understanding by Design and have formed study groups to further

explore the nuts and bolts of differentiated instruction. These interactions have created a stronger learning community.

- The school has made significant advances toward developing systems for analyzing data and assessing the progress of students.
 - Monthly grade level conferences focus on data analysis, tracking whole class performance trends and individual student needs. This practice enables teachers to develop common teaching strategies, assessments and rubrics to improve student outcomes. As a result, this work has increased collaboration, allowed for vertical planning and fostered a culture of data-driven instructional planning.
 - Teachers analyze a wide array of student data including New York State exams, teacher-made assessments, ECLAS and Acuity item skills to set yearly instructional goals, determine student groupings, track classroom trends and determine services for targeted students. Additionally, teachers regularly utilize ARIS in data meetings and grade level planning sessions which has resulted in a school culture focused on data and its implications for improved student achievement.
- Through a collection of data, the administration and instructional team provide the staff with professional development opportunities related to their strengths and areas of improvement.
 - Professional development offerings are made through collaboration and consensus. Staff interest surveys, one to one conversations, and teacher self-assessments determine professional development topics. Teachers are given multiple opportunities to participate in on-site and off-site workshops. Additionally, teachers work closely with coaches to develop leadership expertise and as a result, are taking the initiative to develop programs to support teaching and learning. For example, one teacher was funded for an Imaginations Grant to integrate the arts into all subject areas.
 - The principal provides teachers with individualized support, classroom observations with feedback, as well as multiple opportunities to work with outside consultants to support professional growth. Collaborative meetings and the open atmosphere in the school, supports teachers' ability to learn from one another and work toward a common goal. As stated by a staff member, "we are consulted about our professional needs and studying Understanding by Design as a whole staff is helping to make planning lessons purposeful and enables us to think more deeply about our teaching".
- In recognition of the important role parents play in the education of their children, the school has worked to keep the communication with parents constant and focused on student outcomes and social needs.
 - Throughout the academic year, the school provides families with training on ARIS Parent Link and Echalk in order to better equip parents with knowledge of school activities, instructional assignments and additional supports to better meet their child's needs. Orientation nights are offered for parents to better acquaint them with the expectations of the school and staff members. In addition, parents appreciate that the school offers

workshops on cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training, English language learner instruction, and other needed courses.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote a common understanding about how students learn best and align those beliefs with an engaging curriculum so that all learning needs are addressed and evidenced through meaningful work outcomes.
 - Teachers have varying knowledge and skill about differentiation of instruction, as evidenced in lesson plans, tasks and questioning strategies. The use of ARIS data, assessment binders and conference notes provide meaningful data for grouping students according to skill level. However, the data is not used strategically to plan differentiated activities.
 - Instructional lessons tend to focus on whole class work or independent activities, leaving some students unchallenged and disconnected with the task. As a result, not all students are truly engaged and pushed to further their level of thinking in their conversations and work outcomes.
- Revise the curriculum so that a seamless and rigorous instructional focus is embedded across the content areas for the varying needs of all students in order to accelerate student learning.
 - The school uses a standards based curriculum. However, there is little evidence of incorporating higher order thinking skills and rigor into the curriculum across all grades. As a result, students are left unchallenged to meet high expectations.
 - In order to better motivate and engage students in their learning, the school has entered the beginning stage of enriching their curriculum plans with project based learning. This is not yet common practice throughout the school.
- Develop cohesive internal systems and protocols to ensure alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessments.
 - The implementation of the balanced literacy curriculum with consistent application of the workshop model in English language arts is a school wide goal, yet there are inconsistent procedures in place to monitor the application of literacy practices and strategies in classrooms and across grades.
- Develop a common practice for setting measurable and differentiated learning goals for all students.
 - Currently, individual teachers utilize various ways to establish goals for students resulting in inconsistent expectations from grade to grade. Hence, the practice of setting goals to further student outcomes is not consistently linked to measurable data.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: The General D. Chappie James	△	▶	✓	+
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>	△	▶	✓	+
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>	△	▶	✓	+
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