

# **Quality Review Report 2009-2010**

**Catherine & Count Basie School**

**Middle School 072**

**133-25 Guy R. Brewer Boulevard  
Queens  
NY 11434**

**Principal: Crystal Taylor-Brown**

**Dates of review: January 11-12, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Diane Sharett**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Catherine & Count Basie is a middle school with 807 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 63% Black, 14% Hispanic, 1% White, and 22% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 92.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

The school is a welcoming, nurturing professional learning community that is sought after by families. The school houses three academies each led by an assistant principal and a support team. Students are excited to come to school to learn and the school's high expectations encourage them to excel. The school has a safe environment because of a zero tolerance policy and a refined ladder of referral resulting in a significant decrease in suspensions this year. Teachers are eager to further student learning before, during, and after school to assist academic success. The parents are proud for their children to attend the school. In the words of a parent, the school unites all students and "bridges communities".

The principal is an educator with a strong vision and believes in the power of using data to effect change. She advocates student autonomy and in giving students an active voice in decision making in the school. Students complete self-assessments in every subject eight times a year. In discussion with their teachers they use these assessments to determine strengths and challenge areas. They create action plans to advance their progress in identified areas. This holds students accountable and empowers them to be responsible for their own learning. Students benefit from a broad education that includes the arts and although the curriculum is aligned to State standards, the level of rigor in processing higher order thinking skills and differentiation of instruction is not consistent across classes. Even though structures have been developed to regularly evaluate and adjust curricular and instructional practices, alignment and coherence between what is taught and how it is taught are not evident across some classes. Organizational decisions are driven by data with a focus on specific subgroups of students to increase their achievement but some teachers do not use data consistently to set goals for subgroups, or target students who are the struggling learners and higher achieving students to accelerate progress. However, external and internal organizations thrive in the school and make certain the requests of students and families are not only heard but are met. There is an abundance of extracurricular activities to reinforce the academic, physical and socio-emotional needs of students.

Extensive professional development is a top priority and successfully impacts the inquiry process school wide. The core team is the proven conduit to advance the cluster teams in each academy. Thoughtfully scheduled weekly common planning time affords teachers opportunities to attend different meetings, to go on intervisitations, conduct low inference observations and share successes. Their work has led to raising student attendance and decreasing lateness as well as improving student outcomes.

### What the school does well

- The principal's strategic leadership promotes effective data-driven organizational decisions that support school goals well.
  - By restructuring the inquiry team from last year, in addition to creative scheduling and budgeting, the administration has been able to allow the majority of teachers to participate on a teacher team. Each member from the core team facilitates the inquiry meetings across teacher cluster teams in the three academies to ensure that the lessons learned last year inform the work of current teams. Teachers meet regularly to discuss target students, effective instructional strategies, best practices, and action research and as a result, teachers are able to identify specific needs of students and advance their learning.
  - As the result of a thorough analysis of data relating to students' patterns of absence, the principal has implemented an early morning art and music program open to all students that has resulted in higher attendance and benefits students' continuity in learning.
- The school has established very strong partnerships with community based-organizations in order to integrate youth services and provide on going learning to accelerate students' academic and personal growth.
  - The school is effective in taking every opportunity to support students' academic, social-emotional, physical, and psychological needs. An organization works collaboratively with the school staff to ensure necessary core mental health services, such as crisis counseling, assessment and evaluation treatment, for students and their parents.
  - The principal is successfully improving the school environment, safety and respect, through using data collected from students, staff and parents by an outside agency. Students are excited about "Real Talk with Teens", a campaign to refocus students on education and away from gangs. Additionally, students develop reflective practices as they assess their own progress and articulate their next learning steps.
- The school maintains a supportive learning environment that conveys high expectations to students and advances student achievement.
  - The school makes its high expectations explicit by working actively with a popular national honor society to successfully instill in students an enthusiasm for scholarship and service, and to develop leadership skills. This supports student engagement, higher order thinking skills, and problem solving and is impacting positively on student outcomes.
  - Explicit annotations on extensive student displays of work in school reflect guiding comments for clear next steps in reaching for high standards. Displays are in school corridors, on classroom bulletin boards and in student work folders and notebooks.
- Relationships across the school are warm, supportive, and inclusive of students, parents, teachers, and school leaders who all feel valued for their contributions and take pride in being part of the school community.

- The school climate is built on supportive relationships, which enable students to take learning seriously with a desire to improve. Students know that they can “count on teachers” and that there is always someone there if they have a concern. They are encouraged to email their teachers with questions and have an advisory teacher who encourages them to discuss feelings, difficulties, and strengths as well as teaching character lessons.
- Parents are vocal about the positive changes this administration has brought about. They agree the principal is “proactive” and readily shares school goals. Parents express appreciation of the multiple forms of communications. They work on the Comprehensive Educational Plan, discuss curriculum, and feel their opinions are of value. Workshops help parents assist their children with schoolwork.
- The school provides extensive school-wide and individualized professional development and support for teachers, based on efficient evaluation of practice, to enable them to use effective teaching methods consistently.
  - Using a data-driven observation self-assessment, teachers receive individual professional development on “Engaging and supporting all student learners” from the professional teaching standards. Multiple professional development sessions on relevant topics enable teachers to become consistent in their use of performance standards. Topics are identified through the monitoring of teaching and learning and include setting short-term achievable benchmarks and differentiated instruction. Newer teachers also have a mentor and buddy teacher to provide valuable support.
  - Regular use of student interim benchmark assessments including Acuity, Performance Series, a mid term assessment and classroom observations are methods to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher competence and mentoring supports for newer teachers. The core teacher team model leads to distributed-leadership across teams. As a result, teachers are learning the inquiry process and developing strategies to integrate into the content areas that are having a direct impact on teaching and student outcomes.
- The cabinet works cohesively and consistently to review and analyze a wide range of relevant data to evaluate the effectiveness of decisions and guide the school forward, sharing its vision with the community.
  - The extensive use of attendance data, State results, and periodic and classroom assessments to monitor performance and progress is responsible for an increase in attendance, and a focus on specific subgroups to secure improvement. The school has established effective structures to regularly evaluate student achievement and make adjustments for sharing data with students and families.
  - Through a refined ladder of discipline to handle minor infractions, which all staff follow, the school is in a strong position to hold students accountable. Evidence indicates that conducting hall sweeps and random scanning has led to a significant decrease in suspensions this year.

- Teachers participate actively on teacher teams using embedded inquiry approaches to foster distributive leadership and improve student learning.
  - Teachers take on key roles to build competence school wide. The core team is the catalyst to facilitate all teacher teams. Each teacher attends a cluster inquiry team meeting to provide professional development on the inquiry process with specific protocols. This structure empowers teachers in a leadership role and promotes peer mentoring effectively. Innovative means of disseminating key messages ensure ideas and best practices are shared across the school. Teachers meet regularly to discuss teaching strategies, instructional practices, and identify action research to meet the needs of target students as evidenced by the Gifted and Talented Teacher Team.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Promote greater consistency in using assessment data to differentiate instruction so that each lesson promotes increased rigor in learning and higher order thinking skills to challenge all students whatever their level, particularly the highest achievers.
  - Although many teachers differentiate instruction, this is not yet a consistent practice across all classes. As a result, individual learning needs are not always addressed. For example, Level 4 students are not often challenged because they are assigned to support struggling students rather than tackling demanding work that captures their interest and motivates them to achieve their potential.
- Ensure that all constituents consistently apply measurable and differentiated learning goals to accelerate student progress through regular, formal checks against measurable targets.
  - Teachers and teacher teams analyze data to identify which students require additional supports but it is not always evident if students are progressing according to plan. This is because not all teachers set measurable and specific differentiated learning goals for struggling learners, monitor their progress and make timely adjustments to next step goals and supports. For example, some students only broadly state their goals as, “get all my homework finished” or “learn more about waves”.
- Strengthen the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions to increase the coherence of policies and practices school wide progress.
  - Structures are in place for leaders and faculty to regularly evaluate and adjust curricular and instruction. Some evaluation lacks rigor and does not reinforce capacity building because too little attention is paid to how instruction is delivered across all classes to challenge each student’s learning.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Catherine & Count Basie Middle School	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<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
<b>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.</b>				
<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

<b>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.</b>							
<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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>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.</b>							
<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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>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.</b>							
<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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>