

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

The Lefferts School

Elementary School 112

**7115- 15th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11228**

Principal: Louise Verderame-Alfano

Dates of review: October 26 - 27, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Karina Costantino

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Lefferts School is an elementary school with 491 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 25% Hispanic, 26% White, and 48% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 96.05%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The curriculum at the school is exceptionally strong and coherent, connecting across grades and subjects, supporting learning at high levels improving academic outcomes.
 - Two school-based planning options provide teachers with 50-minute blocks of time to plan units of studies in all subjects for all subgroups. An analysis of students' spelling and vocabulary indicated a need for a differentiated word study instructional program, resulting in the school incorporating Words their Way, a research based differentiated word study approach for all students. Reflections on the effectiveness of lessons show an alignment to the Common Core State Standards and a focus on closing the achievement gap among subgroups.
 - The Independent Investigation Methods (IIM) process used throughout the school and in Common Core Standards work, increases students' exposure to non-fiction text and teaches research skills parallel with content. As a result, students use critical thinking skills by gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing information to prepare and present products with peers. In addition, they are participating in an inquiry approach to the learning of nonfiction material as it relates to literacy.
- Teaching practices are highly engaging across all classrooms providing support to all learners in all subgroups.
 - Teachers on all grades purposely align the curriculum and incorporate the Common Core State Standards to ensure good classroom instruction. During structured weekly grade-level and cross-grade level team meetings staff collaborate using data analysis to inform instruction. Additionally, teachers effectively plan all aspects of their lessons using the higher cognitive practice of Bloom's taxonomy resulting in academic rigor in all classroom activities including questioning during lessons.
 - Grade-wide standards and curriculum mapping across the content areas, including reading, writing, math, social studies, and word study, serve as important tools in developing rigor for all students. Teachers applying reflective practice have ongoing discussions around student data, which effectively results in the differentiation of instruction in every classroom. The English as a second language teachers, the reading recovery teacher, special needs teachers, and teachers providing academic intervention, plan together thus translating individual student goals into their support service, resulting in a positive impact on student achievement as reflected in the Progress Report.
- Regular use of a wide range of data allows leaders and faculty to have an ongoing understanding of the progress of individual and group performance, which effectively informs instruction.
 - The school has a highly focused assessment timeline that enables teachers to target student goals through small group and individual conferences and strategy groups. Throughout the school year, assessments are re-administered, data is analyzed, and new goals are set which align to annual school goals. This

initiative is having a positive impact on teachers revising lessons. Consequently, students' needs are met on a daily basis.

- Based on a well-established reading assessment, each teacher, after an in-depth analysis of the data, creates their own highly differentiated assessments relative to their student's individual targeted learning needs. For reading and math, colleagues share their work with other content area teachers so all lessons are differentiated accordingly showing an increase in student performance on class tests and homework.
- The school has highly effective systems for supporting teacher practice with a clear focus on improving instructional practice.
 - School leadership and community share a strong commitment to professional development and collaboration leading to a common culture, as evidenced by two school-based options. During an after-school 50-minute block, tiered professional development driven by teacher need affords teachers suitable support to improve teaching practice. A second school-based option allows teachers to expand their inquiry work and develop strategies to facilitate incorporating the Common Core State Standards into all grade-level instruction. These weekly meetings are resulting in improved outcomes as evidenced by students' results on formative assessments.
 - The principal uses formal and informal observations, conversations with teachers, and a teacher-completed needs assessment to identify suitable supports for staff. She meets with all new teachers monthly and affords them opportunities to attend professional development run by the network and engage in inter- and intra-school class intervisitations, all well focused on improving instructional practices leading to higher levels of student achievement.
- The school effectively monitors and adjusts curricular and organizational structure providing a rigorous, highly effective, inclusive learning environment that challenges all students.
 - The school assigns case managers to all students discussed during pupil progress meetings. The manager effectively follows and adjusts the student's recommended interventions yearlong. In addition, the case manager reports to the principal as to progress toward goals and the effectiveness of the implemented strategies. Students feel well supported and their academic progress in subject areas is improving.
 - A yearlong assessment timeline enables the school to target goals and strategy groups. Results from the re-administration of formative assessments lead to revised students' interim goals reviewed regularly by the principal and assistant principal, and drive changes in teaching practice. Accordingly, there is alignment and coherence between data and professional development throughout the year thus supporting effective instructional practice and student progress.
- School data leads the path for professional development of staff resulting in an increase in student performance.
 - Professional development workshops carefully align with the non-fiction focus for the year and deepen the knowledge of all teachers based on their specific need and subject. Additionally, staff is supported in both their inquiry work and the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards, leading to enhancing students' higher critical thinking skills.

- Instructional team members successfully serve as team leaders for all grade-level inquiry teams, therefore building adult leadership capacity. In addition, teachers regularly share their expertise by facilitating many of the after-school workshops.
- The school has made rapid progress in establishing a clear and congruent approach to sharing information with both students and parents.
 - Through the use of exemplars in all subject areas, teachers develop reflective practices and routines, aligned to the new Common Core State Standards. Students use a checklist from kindergarten through grade 5 to assess their work. This practice empowers students to take responsibility for their learning and articulate next steps.
 - Parents receive monthly progress reports relative to their children's strengths and areas of need. Their use of a tear-off response encourages on-going and reciprocal conversations allowing them to be active partners in their children's education.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the use of technology to further engage students in learning.
 - The principal is revisiting funding for Smartboards in all classrooms, as well as the purchase of additional laptops, as there are only 5 laptops per classroom at this time. This lack of technology impedes the opportunity for all students to benefit from an interactive learning tool that supports research.
- Refine evaluative protocols in order to monitor the impact of teacher teams on improving student outcomes.
 - Teacher teams meet regularly; however, they do not yet consistently use protocols available to monitor their effectiveness.
- Focus professional development opportunities to ensure general education teachers learn suitable strategies to target instruction for special needs students.
 - The school is currently participating in the New York City Phase 1 Special Education pilot focusing on providing students with individual education plan designated special services while attending in a general education setting. However, the school does not yet have a full menu of additional interventions to enhance the performance of special needs students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: The Lefferts School	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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

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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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			
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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			
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed