

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Magnet School for Science and Technology

Elementary School K154

**1625 11th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11215**

Principal: Samuel Ortiz

Dates of review: February 8 - 9, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Magnet School for Science and Technology is an elementary school with 435 students from Pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 7% Black, 24% Hispanic, 58% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 94.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's interdisciplinary, inquiry based curriculum, evident in all classes and across all grades and content areas, engages students and develops critical thinking skills in alignment with the Common Core Standards.
 - The school focuses instruction around a social studies based, interdisciplinary curriculum that utilizes historical fiction aligned to content area study. Student inquiry is supported by frequent, carefully integrated trips to key sites, such as the Lefferts House in Prospect Park, which enable students to advance their research. As a result students develop deep content knowledge and extensive academic vocabulary.
 - Through the use of Reader's and Writer's Workshop, and independent reading and writing tasks, instruction is highly individualized. Teachers reflect on student work and target student specific tasks such as those provided on post it's in the notebook of each student in a third grade writing class. Consequently, all students are challenged and motivated, producing quality work that serves as exemplars for classmates.
- Widespread differentiation provides opportunities for all students to engage in deep levels of learning and produce experience based work products.
 - A passionate, consistent belief in empowering students to take ownership of their learning is the core of instruction. High quality, rubric based writing is evident in every classroom and across all grades. Students comment that, "We all have had a writing period since kindergarten" and reflect back on teacher support, "I loved that you gave us time to think on our own." Writing in all classrooms and subgroups is reflective of self selected topics, research, and individualized support, and evidences comprehension and expression that is exceptional in young writers.
- The school's leaders focus all instructional and organizational decisions on reaching school wide goals and improving student achievement.
 - Instructional, organizational and budgetary decisions are extremely reflective of the school's focus on improved student achievement. In the face of budgetary cutbacks, the school's assistant principal, a former mathematics coach, serves in this capacity as well, assisting teacher teams, modeling instruction and helping to analyze data so that the level of support is aligned to the school's instructional goals.
 - Utilizing a school-based option, the principal has instituted a sixty minute lunch period so that teacher teams are able to meet collaboratively for an additional fifty minutes a week. In addition, teachers have been strategically moved to configure strong grade teams. Consequently, teachers regularly plan coherent instructional practices that are individualized and target higher order thinking skills school wide.

- A broad array of student data is used to identify student needs and strengths and align instructional practices, especially at the classroom level positively impacting academic growth.
 - The school identifies subgroups needs and school wide trends by reflecting on extensive curriculum aligned assessments. Rubric based writing, running records, item skills analysis from formative and summative assessments, and open response questions are used at the team and classroom level. As a result, instructional practices including teacher modeling, exemplar problems and mentor texts are evaluated and adjusted to meet student needs on a regular, ongoing basis.
 - Teacher teams and classroom teachers skillfully analyze targeted assessments including running records, phonics assessments, content area rubric based writing, student checklists, and genre aligned rubrics from the Teachers College Writing Continuum to define individual student needs and focus differentiated supports. Students are, therefore, provided with aligned assistance that enables them improve steadily and raise achievement schoolwide.
- The school's vision of student ownership of learning and academic success empowers teachers and students to develop goals that increase student achievement and independence.
 - Response to survey data and a goal to increase student achievement through empowerment and social emotional growth, have led the school to institute "Buddy Classes" as part of the "Caring School Community." Students in upper grades classes are paired with students in the lower grades. These classes share in an activity such as physical education once a week. This has resulted in an environment where students proudly help their "buddies" and academic growth has improved.
 - Reflecting on the evolving State standards and an analysis of student data, the school has a goal of enhanced differentiation in English language arts, especially for the strongest students. A greater focus on content area non-fiction reading is now part of the literacy curriculum. Consequently, students increase content area knowledge, and reading groups are more defined, thereby helping all students to reach higher levels of success.
- An outstanding range of school partnerships, targeting the social and emotional needs of students and providing extensive experiential opportunities for academic growth is the hallmark of the school.
 - The school's "Caring School Community" initiative provides teachers with professional development in holding class meetings and developing discussions around the value specific Book of the Month. As a result, parents comment on the "good vibe the school has with kids," and that there has been "a positive change in the building."
 - A vast array of well aligned partnerships provides students and families with quality enrichments in the arts, on each grade level. These experiences include fourth grade studies and performances of Shakespeare, third grade musical theater and kindergarten chess. Accordingly, students' academic growth is enhanced through real world experiences throughout the day.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a consistent, school wide protocol, with a defined timeframe, to share student progress and next steps with parents.
 - Established systems enable students to actively evaluate their own progress and teachers at the grade and classroom level have developed regular protocols for sharing student progress data with parents. Further, the school shares information extensively through enhanced report cards. However, a universal protocol for sharing student progress data and next steps, at key intervals schoolwide is not yet fully implemented. As a result parental knowledge of student next steps is inconsistent, limiting the degree of support parents can provide to their children.
- Refine the format for aligning and monitoring teacher support, based on classroom observations to promote professional growth.
 - Although the school's leadership uses formal and informal observations, and analysis of student data to reflect on teacher needs and prescribe support, follow up on next steps is somewhat informal and does not have a clearly defined timeframe. Therefore, evaluation of teacher growth and capacity varies, hindering the capability of the school to ensure that all teachers are reaching their maximum potential.
 - The school has a cadre of highly skilled, experienced teachers who serve as mentors. In addition, teachers have the support of the assistant principal who serves as a mathematics coach, as well as an English language arts consultant. However, specific professional development plans with defined goals and benchmark points for all teachers are not formally identified. Consequently, the ability of school to ensure individual teacher progress along an explicit continuum is limited.
- Enhance the system for evaluating the success of sharing student information with families, so as to ensure protocols are highly effective.
 - Although the school regularly appraises the alignment of student assessments and the protocols for analysis of a wide array of student data, the evaluation of the varied procedures for sharing this information with parents throughout the school is not as assiduously undertaken. This results in a limited awareness of the success of parents' understanding of student needs and defined next steps.
- Expand structures to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams and capacity building in order to support their work.
 - The school's leadership monitors the work of collaborative teacher teams through reflection on student data and personal participation at team meetings. However, protocols for sharing these reflections with teams and for sharing of team findings schoolwide are not consistently codified. This limits the impact of strategic successes schoolwide.
 - While the school recognizes capacity in its staff, and provides ample informal opportunities for teacher leadership, formal structures to assess the success of leadership opportunities are still being implemented. As a result, potential for leadership experiences is somewhat lessened.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Magnet School for Science and Technology	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