

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

The Wortman School

K273

**923 Jerome Street
Brooklyn, New York
11207**

Principal: Melessa Avery

Dates of review: October 28-29, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Mary Barton

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 273, The Wortman School, is an elementary school with 410 students from Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 82% Black, 17% Hispanic, and 1% American Indian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 49.75% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50.25%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 92.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders have a very strong teacher and classroom observation system which is strategic, proactive and differentiated in providing clear feedback to teachers.
 - School leaders have developed a Professional Development spreadsheet with quantified observation points gleaned from the observation reports and snapshots written by the school leaders. Assessment binders that have been compiled for each teacher are used to look for trends to develop Professional Development including data from the Teacher Data Initiative.
 - Formal observations and monthly snapshots are uniform looking for particular practices to be in place. All students are to contribute to class discussions to improve their listening and speaking skills. Timers are used to time student tasks to build stamina. The assistant principal stated that “the expectation is that all teachers become master teachers as each child deserves a master teacher”.
- School leaders and faculty align curricula to State standards across all grades and make purposeful decisions to emphasize key standards in order to close the achievement gap.
 - Curriculum maps are in place for the entire school year with a listing of the State standard(s) addressed. In addition, there is a skill/strategy map in place with reading skills and strategies teachers focus with a focus on the State standards. Student pieces with feedback are displayed prominently across all classrooms showing the alignment with State standards.
 - Student and teacher charts and student writing emphasize non-negotiables. Students use the math Exemplars program which emphasizes problem solving. Student work is posted over time with feedback. Students see the progression of their work in meeting the standards.
- School leaders make highly informed and strategic organizational decisions that elevate coherence of practices.
 - School leaders developed a six day schedule cycle. The six day schedule enables students to have consistency in subject offerings. Teachers have the opportunity to attend teacher team meetings which take place once a week to discuss grade level specific information and to plan lessons collaboratively. This meeting is in addition to common preps given to teachers during the week.
 - Purposeful decisions were made to spend capital on people. Students have more individualized and small group focus with smaller classes. Teachers are able to conference with and assess students more frequently enabling teachers to have more information to then address their needs.
- Teachers use wisely a comprehensive range of periodic assessments that result in targeted instructional decisions.
 - The Principal’s Insurance Plan distributed to teachers lists periodic assessments that the teachers need to administer to students so that students have a common experience. Teachers make instructional decisions after reviewing the data on

their own and with their colleagues in the weekly meeting time as the assessments are in place across all classrooms on the particular grades.

- The Exemplars math program allows teachers to assess problem solving. Students to self assess using a rubric to determine mastery. The program was implemented as a result of an analysis of data from last year's math statewide assessment and studying the assessments from the school's math program.
- The principal provides dynamic leadership which is the drive behind the safe environment and the positive attitudes of students.
 - The principal has developed ways to enable the students to meet her high expectations. Attendance has been a problem. Programs honoring students with high attendance, excellent academics and behavior are in place. Students are treated to performances and prizes funded by the school and PTA. The Peace Balloon Movement program includes the posting of a paper balloon of peace on a bulletin board for every day the school is violence free. Monthly incentives encourage peace among the students throughout the building. The principal noted that disciplinary issues have decreased significantly.
 - Students are well known to the staff of P.S. 273. Guidance counselors work with students. Teachers keep tabs on a buddy student they are assigned. Students are also tracked through Pupil Personnel and LRE meetings. In addition, the school has instituted programs such as the Principal's Secret room, a designated space filled with incentives that can be earned by students who have displayed good citizenship during the week. New students are also assigned a student in the class as a buddy to help them.
- The school consistently communicates high expectations to students and families in ways that explain how students and families can meet these expectations.
 - Evidence showed and parents told of many workshops planned by the Parent Coordinator and other staff that focus on academic issues and parenting. Workshops with a focus on grandparents raising children have been given due to this growing trend in the school's population. The parents commented on how the school's workshops help parents/guardians and that the Parent Coordinator helps everyone in many ways including how to use ARIS Parent Link.
 - Each grade level publishes a monthly newsletter informing parents of academic expectations for the month as well as school events and news. The grade level newsletter is worked on collaboratively by grade level teams and communicates the consistency of the instructional practices across all classrooms.
- The tracking of student progress is well organized, accessible and used to adjust instructional decisions.
 - Each teacher has an assessment binder which incorporates ARIS data, and data from America's Choice, Math connects, and conferencing notes. Teachers have an "academic biography" for each student comprised of ARIS data as well as print outs from Acuity, ECLAS, DRA and the school's internal assessments. Information is added as assessments are administered and the results are reviewed and decisions are made to inform instructional strategies.
 - The Principal has a room where student and school data is posted, tracked and revised. Teachers have copies of the information and utilize the information in

creating groups and giving specific interventions to students. School leaders assign students to particular interventions using the Tier Data System which can include the 37 ½ minute program, AIS intervention from a Literacy specialist and/or an after school program in English Language Arts and/or math.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the rigor in differentiating instruction so that tasks accommodate different learning styles and questioning extends higher order thinking skills.
 - It was apparent through classroom visits that differentiation of instruction does not take place consistently across all subject areas and/or in all classrooms. While stronger in ELA and Math, differentiation did not seem to take place in Science or Social Studies.
 - Through the classrooms visited, it was apparent that the implementation of higher order thinking skills questioning needs to be focused on. While apparent in math instruction that was witnessed, teachers need to incorporate higher order thinking skills in teaching content area subjects.
- Build capacity for faculty to collaborate with school leaders and develop and practice leadership.
 - Currently, the Principal invites teachers to share their expertise for a few minutes at the end of the monthly Faculty Conference. While this is a way of recognizing teachers for their good work, teams of teachers should feel encouraged to come forward to share their ideas with administrators about what Professional Development they would like to have and then be able to present at Faculty Conferences or at another forum.
 - The Principal shared a listing of delegation of duties to address the quality of building teacher leadership. Listed were key assignments for coordination of various school initiatives which provides needed oversight. It would be beneficial to encourage faculty to generate initiatives to provide leadership on their own as opposed to having everything come from the Principal.
- Strengthen the inquiry approach to teacher collaboration and encourage their participation in decision making.
 - Teachers meet to discuss student progress and teaching practices but have not met in formal Inquiry Teams until this school year. School leaders need to put formal protocols into place so that teacher teams function with all voices heard and to use the time to look at student work that informs learning needs and instructional trends. School leaders need to formulate a way to have their teacher teams' effectiveness studied. The Core Inquiry Team should have a representative from each teacher team on it to report back findings and trends to inform school leaders. This process will build distributed leadership.
 - Teachers do not seem to have a voice in decision making. They are complaint and carry out the Principal's vision which, while successful, does not enable them to challenge their own thinking and to add to school initiatives. For example, teacher leadership could certainly rise from Inquiry Team work.

School name:	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