

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Samuel Stern

PS007

**160 East 120th Street
New York
NY 10035**

Principal: Racquel Jones

Dates of review: February 7-8, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Marlene D. Wilks

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Samuel Stern (PS 07) is a PreK-8 school with 434 students from Pre K through grade 8. The school population comprises 30% Black, 66% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 50% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 91.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is Proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decision across all aspects of the school to support improvements in teacher and student learning
 - The school partners with Teachers' College for Literacy and mathematics. With this partnership, teachers have opportunities to align elements of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as evidenced by the creation and use of performance-based tasks across the school and the integration of writing in science and social studies. Time is budgeted for weekly teacher meetings based on teacher-created learning goals and student performance expectations resulting in the reduction of pull-out for ELL students and the mainstreaming of Students with Disabilities. Additionally, resources for the arts and professional development for teachers support the school-wide goals.
- The principal and staff work as a unified team to create a calm, respectful and orderly environment for learning to take place
 - The principal and staff's claim of knowing every student in the school was corroborated by parents and students. Students shared that they felt safe because every teacher knows them and that bullying is not tolerated in the school. Parents share that the school's partnership with Century 21 is very much appreciated as it provides extended day activities for students to keep them gainfully occupied. Consequently, the principal has seen improvement in those male students' behavior and class participation who are involved in the basketball tournament. The school provides programs that promote the socio-emotional development of students through anti-bullying workshops evident by slogans around the school. Also, parents can engage in workshops that promote healthy eating and exercise
- The principal has created a learning community that is well-focused on student outcomes with a vision to continue to accelerate learning
 - The principal, staff, School Leadership Team and members of the Student Council have created initial and on-going school-wide goals that are focused on closing the achievement gap. To this end, teacher-teams meet weekly to study supporting literature, set guiding questions and discuss strategies to improve the performance of targeted students. As a result of these weekly team meetings, teachers learn strategies from their peers and bring back results of their students improved performance. One teacher shared how her targeted students reading levels increased from "E" to "H" because of the support provided to her by her colleagues.
- The school consistently communicates high expectations to students and families and engages them in decision making which results in high level of involvement with the school community.

- Staff and the SLT collaborate on setting goals for the school. Through interim progress reports, newsletters, telephone calls, emails, flyers, student work (portfolios) all parents receive consistent updates on their children's scholastic and social development. In particular, parents can meet with teachers every 4-6 weeks to discuss individual student progress. Parents share that informal meetings take place at any time teachers are available. In response to students concerns in the Learning Environment Survey, the school formed a Student Council to provide additional opportunities for students to air their views and help in certain decision-making.
- The vast majority of teachers are engaged in effective collaboration that results in improved student learning
 - The school has identified five main teacher teams that engage in weekly collaborative inquiry meetings around the school's goal of closing the achievement gap for all sub-groups. As a result of these meetings, teachers feel supported in their work and are able to learn strategies to help improve student performance. Teachers coordinate and lead team meetings. These meetings permit teachers to showcase their particular expertise in content and teacher pedagogy which builds capacity. As a result, the administrators rely on key teacher-leaders to support teachers' professional growth throughout the building.
- The school structures professional development so that teachers can continually reflect on and revise classroom practices that are approaching the CCSS.
 - Teachers have engaged in some deep learning experiences around the CCSS. As a result, teachers on the lower grades have worked to integrate elements of the CCSS into the ELA and the mathematics curriculum. Published pieces of students' work in K-2 show an integration of science and social studies that aligns with CCSS informational writing. Professional development opportunities for teachers are purposefully selected (by both teachers and administrators) and are designed to either support teachers' development of content knowledge or improvement of their pedagogic practices evidenced in the use of performance-based task.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop clear school-wide expectations for what rigorous tasks and classroom instruction look like so that students are appropriately challenged across grades and subject areas.
 - The school is making great efforts to engage students in performance-based tasks. However, some of the tasks focused merely on skills rather than on providing students with opportunities for higher-order thinking. A regular focus on procedural tasks alone prevents students from amassing critical thinking skills and rigorous problem-solving habits that are necessary at any and many points of transference. In addition, teachers' lack of attention to provide multiple entry points to solving a problem will adversely impact the progress of the student who learns a different way.

- Strengthen the analysis of common assessment data to more clearly identify strengths and needs of student sub-groups to differentiate instructional strategies accordingly.
 - The school shares that lesson planning is based on data gathered from the monitoring of student progress. Some classrooms visits provided no evidence that data informed planning since all students were engaged in the same task. In addition, some students lacked the pre-requisite skills and strategies necessary to complete the assigned task. Although groups of teachers meet weekly to analyze student work as a means to discuss student performance, the results from common formative assessments are not always used to create the “big picture” thereby limiting the opportunity for meaningful differentiated lessons to occur in all classrooms.

- Design a uniform protocol for observation to provide a common lens that evaluates teaching practices and identifies next steps.
 - Closing the achievement gap is a school goal. The lack of a uniform protocol that targets specific areas for student improvement and that provides regular feedback on progress toward attainment of goals restricts teachers’ from making instructional decisions at the classroom level and administrators’ decisions at the school-wide level. In addition, the failure to formalize the observation process minimizes the seriousness with which some teachers attend to goal attainment as was evident in students’ lack of extended responses in mathematics, an expressed school-wide goal.

- Deepen differentiation of instruction so that all lessons engage students and offer suitable challenge at their level including effective questioning that elicits higher-order thinking and extends learning.
 - The school believes that students learn best when learning is differentiated and students collaborate. While most teachers effectively differentiate instructional methods, students in a few classrooms sat in groups but did not collaborate on the task with which they were having difficulties finding the correct solution. As a result, students missed the opportunity to check their understanding with their peers which could have resulted in the correct solution. In most classrooms, the level of differentiation went beyond teacher practice, but in some the tasks were the same for all the students with the same expected outcomes. Consequently, students who struggled with finding the one solution or who displayed mastery of the concept or skill were either not successful or not challenged.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

| | | | | |
|---|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| School name: Samuel Stern | 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 |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|