

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Clarence Witherspoon School

Elementary School Q045

126-28 150th Street

Queens

NY 11436

Principal: Samantha Severin

Dates of review: March 23- 24, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Clarence Witherspoon is an elementary school with 449 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 81% Black, 11% Hispanic, 2% White, 1% American Indian and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 93.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The leadership and faculty align curricula to key standards with rigorous and higher order tasks to engage all learners.
 - Using the Common Core State Standards, curriculum maps include the expectations for rigorous writing through monthly genre studies across all grades. Rubrics serve as both an assessment and teaching tool throughout the unit of study, resulting in rigorous writing that reflect students' ability to include detail, expand upon themes and infuse their writing with a sense of voice. A grade 5 literature circle is effectively facilitated by students with the use of prompts to ensure the conversation about the book promotes critical thinking and accountable talk. As a result, students' participation in higher order thinking discussions pushes their thoughts and fosters ownership of their work.
- Across classrooms teachers utilize a variety of instructional methodologies, resources and differentiated approaches to effectively engage students and meet their learning goals.
 - Expert use of SMART boards and other technology tools engage and differentiate student instruction in a grade 6 class on congruent metric units. In a grade 2 class, the school's anthology is used to instruct students in grammar usage. The task fully supports individualized instruction by offering differentiated learning tasks during individual and small strategy groups. A teacher team attributes student growth to instructional practices such as differentiated skill strategy groups that are formed based on assessment data results. Thus, recent Acuity assessment results indicate that while most grade 3 students are making progress, the target population demonstrates an increase in growth from 39% to 70% in English language arts.
- The principal makes informed and purposeful organizational decisions that result in increased learning opportunities for all students.
 - Common planning time is built into the schedule to provide increased opportunities for teachers to collaboratively analyze student data and plan instructional lessons. The coach's flexible schedule fosters on-going professional learning through study groups and lunch and learns, with a major focus on the Common Core State Standards and writing. As a result, teachers' comment that differentiated learning groups, modeling, and direct instruction has enabled them to narrow their focus around specific writing skills, such as voice, and meet the individual learning needs of all students.
 - The principal purposefully adjusted the instructional time to strengthen learners' critical thinking skills through literature circles in grade 4 through grade 6 and provide additional teacher time to work in flexible groups to employ explicit teaching strategies. As a result, the school's recent

English language arts diagnostic assessment data reveal that there was a 12% increase in the number of overall points obtained in grade 6.

- School leaders and faculty effectively use a range of relevant data that successfully supports the identification of students' performance and enable timely adjustments in instructional decisions.
 - Benchmark assessments are administered in September in literacy and math. Progress checklists in math highlight student performance so that faculty consistently discuss student progress and make necessary adjustments. Grade 5 teachers saw that students were not mastering key math concepts due to limited knowledge of multiplication. Consequently, teachers use Minute Math and create multiplication math strips, resulting in increased student accountability in acquiring multiplication skills and improved formative assessment results that reflect students scoring higher on problems that involve multiplication facts.
- School leaders ensure that teachers receive targeted professional development that result in maximized opportunities to improve their professional growth and student learning.
 - The principal's analysis of classroom observations enable the leadership and coach to provide targeted support for teachers in customized rubrics, core standards, skill strategy, curriculum mapping, and differentiated instruction. As a result, teachers have a common language and instructional focus that has improved their professional practice.
 - Teachers set individual goals in September and identify areas of professional growth using a common model. Teachers engage in one-on-one conferencing, formal and informal observations and participate in intervisitations based on differentiated needs. The multitude of professional learning opportunities assists teachers to develop strong skills, such as differentiated learning, that supports student learning and has enabled the leadership to provide more targeted support to teachers that has improved their professional practice.
- Teacher's work effectively in collaborative teams to analyze data, implement exemplary instructional strategies and adjust instruction to improve learning.
 - Inquiry work is focusing on improving the performance of high level 3 students in English through higher order questioning strategies that promote accountable talk and critical thinking. As a result, literature circles are employed in the instructional program. The analysis of data revealed that students struggle mainly in reading comprehension so teachers modified their practice to include additional student teacher conference time to exclusively address students' specific needs. Acuity is linked to the literacy block as an independent activity and offers extended time to students during guided reading. As a result, teachers are well aware of the specific needs of their students and take ownership of their learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend offerings to increase parent involvement and engagement to build capacity and conscientiously engage parents in decision making that improves student outcomes.
 - The leadership communicates the school's high expectations through avenues such as parent workshops, holiday events, parent teacher association meetings, and school leadership meetings. However, parents' participation in school leadership team meetings has not led to them having a voice within the school. As a result, the school cannot fully gauge the shared commitment that parents have for the school's high expectations.
- Broaden opportunities for individual teachers and teams to purposefully engage in professional learning and practice leadership abilities to improve their practices and pedagogy.
 - Teachers engage in inter-visitations to observe instructional practice such as guided reading and the implementation of literature circles. However, the school has not created a model lab site that offers teachers' opportunities for shared reflection and a common protocol that enables them to view instruction through a common lens. Thus, the opportunity for teachers to realize their individual professional growth is diminished. Teachers serve as facilitators on teams; however, there is not yet a conscious effort to develop them as key leaders. Consequently, adult capacity building within the school is limited.
- Expand youth supports that positively promote students' personal development and academic growth so that they successfully accomplish meeting their learning goals.
 - The school offers various opportunities for faculty to engage in a range of on and off site professional development. However, offerings do not enable faculty to support students' social and emotional needs. Additionally, the school has limited partnerships that support the social emotional and academic growth of students. Consequently, the school struggles to equip staff with sufficient training and develop strong partnerships that meet students' social and emotional needs and provide them with real world learning opportunities.
- Continue the development of structures to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams and build leadership to improve pedagogical growth.
 - Teacher teams are highly collaborative and engage in regular conversations regarding data to determine the needs of students. However, the school does not have a formal system to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their work and leadership development opportunities. As a result, the school's ability to know precisely which instructional practices consistently have the greatest impact on all students across all grades and classes is hindered.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: The Clarence Witherspoon 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