

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**Seneca School**

**Elementary School Q088**

**60-85 Catalpa Avenue  
Ridgewood  
NY 11385**

**Principal: David Bishop**

**Dates of review: November 30-December 1, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Seneca School is an elementary school with 1074 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 53% Hispanic, 36% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 93.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions to support improvements in learning in order to meet students' learning needs.
  - The instructional goal of improving data collection and analysis is supported by the change in schedule of the data specialist who is now able to meet with groups of teachers during flexible times of the day in order to assist them in learning how to disaggregate data. An outgrowth of this modification allows teachers to utilize reading assessment results and better group students according to their proficiency levels.
  - Academic intervention specialists and English language learner instructors work closely with classroom teachers while utilizing a new push-in model so that students' writing needs are met in a timely and organized manner. As a result, an improvement was noted in students' writing techniques based on their reflections of math goals and practice.
- Teachers work collaboratively to examine student work, plan together, and share ideas and best practices in order to improve student outcomes.
  - Each grade's inquiry team meets regularly to review students' work using anchor pieces. To strengthen this process, teams align research-based methods with their current instructional practices to determine what standards are being implemented and how lessons are evolving into best practices. As a result of this work, teams are looking at different research models to strengthen their instructional methods and delivery.
  - Teachers on inquiry teams take turns facilitating the meetings and setting the agendas, hence establishing distributed leadership roles. The impact of this development has created lead teachers on each grade level.
- The school provides a safe, caring environment where students are engaged in learning and appreciate the support they receive for their personal and academic development.
  - Groups of students express that they feel very safe in school and that the staff "really care about kids and the way they learn." As a result, students feel comfortable taking risks and challenging themselves with harder tasks.
  - A recent anti-bullying assembly for students in grade 3 through grade 5 conveyed a strong message that made students feel protected. An extension of this program involves the tracking of occurrence reports to determine the program's overall effectiveness.
- The development and utilization of assessment tools is an ongoing process that allows teachers to organize data in order to identify trends in student performance so that adjustments are made to instructional decisions.
  - The utilization of the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Assessment in the lower grades assists teachers in creating a solid method for tracking the progress of students. The outcome of this process is the ability to group students by skill for enrichment or remedial purposes.

- Teachers responsible for intervention and collaborative teaching classes create pre-assessments in math in order to plan lessons that foster flexible student groups according to their needs. The impact of this process allows teachers to make classroom level decisions based on data that is current and relevant to the lessons of the week.
- Teachers use data to plan instruction and set goals for subgroups of students in order to best address students' needs.
  - Teacher teams analyze and revise writing rubrics so they are aligned to the Common Core Standards and offer teachers a more rigorous resource to build their instruction from when working with groups of students. This has resulted in a more cohesive way to look at student writing in addition to teachers owning the changes in what they are teaching.
  - Teachers of English language learners track student progress by using reading class checklists and the math Item Distractor Analysis Report which allows teachers to look deeper into a specific category of learners. This process of identifying a group within a subgroup has yielded extended day supports for English language learners that have demonstrated increased proficiency levels in reading and math.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Further develop the curriculum to be more rigorous and engaging so that all students are challenged and make progress in their learning.
  - Teachers are working from a variety of instructional programs and initiatives with no definitive State standard aligned curriculum for literacy. Consequently, the curriculum struggles to challenge all students with rigorously engaging, high level thinking tasks that close the achievement gap in student performance.
  - Although the school is working hard to improve student outcomes, at this time instruction does not reflect planning for the many different types of learners.
- Intensify pedagogical practices so that data drives the implementation of academic tasks in order to meet the needs of all students through rigorously engaging learning experiences.
  - Teachers use the workshop model for reading and writing however, there is little evidence of differentiated instruction implementing technology or students' modalities based on their strengths. In the absence of this practice, teachers grapple with using data they have collected to determine what type of differentiated method would best meet students' needs for optimum outcomes.
  - Students' writing, in draft and final copy form, are represented throughout the school. Written work is tagged with graphic organizers, student friendly rubrics and teachers' feedback. Teacher-directed lessons struggle to demonstrate how purposeful groupings and academic tasks accommodate the varied learning styles, and how effective questioning elicits higher order thinking. As a result, a clear link between students' involvement with the

instructional lessons and their cumulative work found in folders, portfolios or homework books is ambiguous.

- Align teacher created assessments to the curriculum so that instructional decisions can be adjusted based on the analysis of student learning outcomes.
  - The school gathers data from the early childhood literacy assessment system, Everyday Math checklists, and Teachers College checklists to analyze student progress. At this time there is no link between the data and the adjusted instructional decisions indicating success.
  - The practice of gathering student data in reading, writing, and mathematics, is inconsistent among teachers. In the absence of identifying students' strengths and areas of need, teachers' ability to constantly incorporate differentiated strategies into their instruction is hindered. Therefore limiting data gathering and analysis practices to all core subjects in order to develop a complete picture of students' progress across all aspects of the school.
- Review and refine teacher observation tools to monitor teaching practices and employ procedures that enhance professional growth in order to foster higher levels of academic achievement.
  - Classroom observations are employed both formally and informally with feedback provided to teachers. In the absence of revisiting recommendations provided to teachers in order to re-examine instructional practices, the evaluation of teacher growth is missing. The use of recommendations as a data source to provide staff with differentiated professional development has not yet evolved into a regular practice used to support teacher growth.
  - Professional development opportunities have been provided by network staff and progress has been implemented in the areas of data collection, rubric awareness and writer's workshop. However, a collection of teacher's instructional needs has yet to be gathered through a self-reflective survey in order to provide individualized professional development to staff members.
- Evaluate the systems used to monitor progress toward defined goals and make well-aligned changes through interim checks against measurable targets so that student learning is accelerated over time.
  - The core inquiry team meets weekly to review the progress being made regarding school goals, but there is no entry point for evaluation. Without a plan developed to regularly evaluate the recommendations that are being conveyed by this team, teachers' struggle to determine if prescribed long term outcomes and interim check points are helping students show academic growth.
  - The data specialist is allotted time to meet with individual and groups of teachers in order to assist with data collection and analysis procedures. At this time, there are no systems in place to determine if teachers are benefiting from the expertise of the data specialist in order to create maximum contributions towards the school's goals.

**Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010**

|                                   |           |          |          |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>School name: Seneca School</b> | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
| <b>Overall QR Score</b>           |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |

| <b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>                             |           |          |          |           |
|---|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>  | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
| 1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?   |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 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? |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?  |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?   |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| <b>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.</b>                 |           |          |          |           |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i>   | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
| 2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?   |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?   |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?  |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?   |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |

**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**

|           |                       |          |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <b>UD</b> | <b>Underdeveloped</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>Developing</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>Proficient</b> | <b>WD</b> | <b>Well Developed</b> |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|