

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**Mary D. Carter School**

**Elementary School 151**

**50-05 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue**

**Queens**

**NY 11377**

**Principal: Jason Goldner**

**Dates of review: January 26 and February 4, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Ronald Feinstein**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Mary D. Carter is an elementary school with 605 students from pre-k through grade 5. The school population comprises 13% Black, 49% Hispanic, 15% White, and 19% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 93%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The curricula offer a range of experiences, including music, to a variety of learners that facilitates ownership of learning.
  - In response to recent state summative mathematics achievement a new math program was introduced this year and is in full implementation mode in all grades to better meet the learning needs of students. Predictive data and end of unit assessments, while early in the implementation cycle for new curricula, suggests that the program is well-aligned to the learning needs of students.
  - Three recently hired special education teachers work in collaborative teaching teams aligned to the school's instructional goals. These teacher teams share responsibility for students with special needs who continue to make exemplary gains.
- School leaders and faculty use a wide range of assessment data to monitor school-level needs, student learning outcomes and plan instruction and intervention accordingly.
  - Teams of teachers and the coach develop assessment strategies at each grade level and make decisions about what information is most important to collect. For example, K-2 students use a teacher-developed benchmark system in science that is further supported by the science-literacy connection in the English language arts curriculum. This has resulted in K-2 students meeting their benchmark goals and at-risk first graders have moved at least five levels as measured by Fountas & Pinnell.
  - Classroom level data is consistently gathered by teachers in assessment binders that include grade level expectations, class record sheets, running records, reading levels and benchmarks for progress, writing samples, test analysis by unit and student writing rubrics. Teachers identify and articulate a clear picture of individual students' and challenges from this data and have actionable benchmark data for differentiating instruction.
- The school is a safe place where students engage in learning and can appreciate the level of support they receive that impacts their personal and academic development.
  - Students, parents and teachers articulate a strong level of support the school provides by inviting them to play a meaningful role in setting goals and making important decisions. Parents appreciate the expanding opportunities to be involved in their children's education and student are eager to attend school as evidenced in the attendance rate that exceeds most peer schools.
  - Co-ed Presidents preside over a student council with representation from grades 3-5. A student survey administered to 196 students across grades 3-6 was developed to provide teachers with ideas about how their classes might be improved. The survey, among other findings, suggests that teachers are perceived as encouraging success and students revealed they want to be challenged.

- The principal continues to create a learning community focused on student outcomes with a vision that drives student learning.
  - School leaders and faculty collaboratively set academic goals that fit the framework and expectations of the International Baccalaureate Organization. In addition, the faculty has developed goals from a needs assessment, which revealed a need to focus on state standards in literacy, math and science. Because the faculty is involved in the goal-setting process, all school stakeholders are aware of the direction of the school.
- The principal has established systems for school self-evaluation, review and modification of practice with a focus on improved student.
  - As a result of a 2010-2014 Federal Magnet Grant the school has recently begun work on curriculum development and curriculum mapping including assessments aligned to both Common Core State Standards and the Standards of the International Baccalaureate Organization's Primary Years Program.
  - School leaders and faculty have added interim progress reports as a way to adjust the process and format for sharing performance data. These are distributed in January and April and parent leaders believe this process contributes to increased parent involvement and students comment that it helps them "think it through and see what I should do".

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

- Continue to develop curricula that is coherent, aligned to identified key State standards and that consistently provides rigorous learning opportunities that emphasize critical thinking.
  - While the school is adopting a new literacy program, there is currently limited understanding of how the current state standards and the Common Core Learning Standards are aligned to this program. There is also currently no focus on identifying and emphasizing the places in this curriculum where there are opportunities for student to infer, interpret and engage in critical thinking. Tasks in both mathematics and literacy display uneven teacher interpretations of rigor and as implemented do not typically emphasize higher order skills. As a result, students are not consistently and sufficiently challenged to develop critical thinking skills.
- Promote greater understanding and more skillful implementation of data- driven instruction so that all students are challenged at the appropriate level.
  - Small groups of children are at work in many classrooms, but tasks, for the most part are delivered to the whole-class and up front by the teachers with little opportunity for conferencing and actual real-time access to individual student work products, which often leaves higher performing students unchallenged.
  - Implementation of a new mathematics program lacks attention to and understanding of current process strands and evolving standards for mathematical practice, thus students who might be accelerated are overlooked by a pedagogy that rigidly adheres to program directions.

- Use the school's observation tool to articulate and explicitly support the attainment of school-wide goals for both teachers' professional growth and improved student achievement.
  - This year the principal has introduced new literacy and math curricula as well as protocols designed to focus on and improve instruction such as problems of practice and instructional rounds. While the majority of staff supports these changes, there is currently not a clear classroom observation tool or aligned professional development plan designed to identify where individual teachers are in the continuum of being able to implement the new curricula and practices. The lack of this plan may hinder capacity building and future teacher investment.
  - A Magnet Resource Specialist and a consultant are on staff to provide necessary support and intervention for teachers in improving their practice. Currently, a major portion of their time is dedicated to the writing of more rigorous curricula that teachers will be asked to implement in the following year; this takes away time that could be used supporting teachers and also leaves teachers out of the collaborative process needed for ownership of teaching and learning. As a result, teachers may not be ready to implement the higher level of pedagogy required to successfully facilitate new curricula.
- Provide more consistent feedback to students and families with detailed reasons for their success and clear next steps for improvement to help them set and achieve high goals.
  - Twice yearly progress reports supplement the report cards and keep parents and students generally informed about math and literacy progress, but do not provide information on students' strengths and weaknesses or specific next steps for improvement. Across classrooms students receive encouragement, but not content specific written feedback with clear next steps for improvement as evidenced by their work folders. Although feedback from teachers to students in the upper grades provides more clarity for next steps, there is inconsistency school-wide in terms of students receiving content specific, written feedback with clear next steps for improvement. This limits clarity of expectations for student growth and stifles students' ability to self-direct their own learning.
- Establish greater consistency by including parents and students in school decision-making, ensuring consistent communication and active involvement in the school community.
  - School leaders and faculty encourage parents to complete coursework to become Learning Leaders and several have become successful advocates for their own students and the school in general. These trained individuals assist in the cafeteria at lunchtime which has had positive effects on the cafeteria tone and student behavior. While this program has been successful, there are currently only a small number of parents who are active in more formal school decision-making processes. This can limit investment in the school community.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Mary D. Carter	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
<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>	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	
<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>	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		

<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.</b>							
<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					
<b>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.</b>							
<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					
<b>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.</b>							
<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					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed