

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**Castlewood School**

**Elementary School Q186**

**252-12 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11426**

**Principal: Dolores Troy-Quinn**

**Dates of review: November 22-23, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Anita E. Saunders**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Castlewood School is an elementary school with 367 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 9% Black, 21% Hispanic, 29% White, and 37% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 29% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009-2010 was 96.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is well-developed.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has created an exceptionally strong and coherent curriculum that connects across grades and subjects to meet the academic needs of students thus improving academic achievement.
  - The very detailed curriculum provides content alignment with the Common Core State Standards and instructional coherence across grades in all curriculum subjects and assessments. Teachers are trained to use the identified unit goals, focus skills, and teaching points found in the curriculum to ensure the instructional strategies meet the needs of the diverse populations. In addition, a complete social studies assessment program with rubrics per grade was developed, providing consistency as to how and what is being assessed across grades. As a result, accurate data is available for planning instruction to meet the needs of students.
- Instruction is centered around a clear set of beliefs based on student learning that results in differentiated lessons to challenge students as they grow.
  - The principal and staff believe that “teaching is most critical and it must continuously get better to improve learning for the students.” Therefore, student work is endlessly analyzed and teaching strategies are examined and reflected upon so that appropriate strategies are used to differentiate instruction. In an integrated co-teaching kindergarten class, two students were challenged to extend their thinking by composing a descriptive sentence and self monitor with a rubric. A decimal lesson incorporated various entry points by using different games for groups of students. Hence, students’ learning needs are met through carefully planned, differentiated lessons focused on challenging students.
- The principal’s strategic leadership promotes organizational decisions that clearly support different levels of goals to constantly improve student outcomes.
  - From an analysis of a multitude of data, two F-status teachers were hired to engage higher level students in enriching and challenging investigations based on identified needs. Students therefore engaged in individual research tasks and participated in a project fair where they showcased and explained their outcomes.
  - A school based option provides the staff with an hour lunch period allowing additional time for professional development. Through tactical programming, specialty and classroom teachers meet and plan together. Furthermore, per session funding enables study groups to meet and discuss professional texts, resulting in the application of specific strategies studied into instructional math practices. These organizational decisions result in improving student learning and achievement.
- Teachers work effectively in collaborative teams to analyze data in order to plan instruction that supports the needs of a diverse student population to improve student learning outcomes.

- Teams of teachers meet weekly to track student progress using a variety of formative and summative data and continuously make adjustments to curriculum and teaching practices. Item skills analysis revealed a need for additional understanding and communication in problem solving. Teachers also engage in lesson study where they visit classrooms to observe, discuss and refine lessons. Furthermore, the work of teacher teams with the Common Core State Standards has produced an assessment system for social studies that enables them to effectively assess and evaluate student progress throughout the grades.
- Samples of inquiry subgroup work are analyzed by teams of teachers for additional strategy recommendations. After viewing a video of reading conferences focused on envisioning, a packet of student assessments using an envisioning rubric was examined and it was determined the assessments required further fine tuning. As a result, the needs of students with disabilities to the gifted are continuously being met.
- The school has established effective systems for monitoring teaching practices with a clear focus on improving instructional practices which has led to enhanced student outcomes.
  - The principal meets with teachers to plan their professional growth needs and provides various opportunities to attend workshops, resulting in an increase of teacher expertise and learning. Daily informal walkthroughs by administration to examine student work raise specific questions regarding teaching that result in adjustments to instructional practices. Observations of new teachers provide individual feedback and recommendations that are monitored by timely follow up observations to ensure implementation. Purposeful staffing based on teacher performance and student outcomes result in most classes being designated as integrated co-teaching.
- The principal has created an exceptional learning community that is focused on student outcomes with a vision to accelerate learning for all students.
  - The school community is focused on meeting the individual needs of all students to close the achievement gap. Every action plan is aligned with the goals of the comprehensive education plan and based on analysis of student data and work. One such goal states that 80% of students with an individual education plan will make one year's growth in reading comprehension. As a result, teacher teams focus on examining student work to share and learn successful strategies. Hence, the school subscribes to a theory of action that there must be a continuous cycle of improvement for adults as well as students to accelerate student learning.
  - School goals and action plans are the result of comprehensive analyses of assessments. For example, it was determined students needed additional instruction and practice in problem solving. As a result, a unit of Singapore Mathematics was included in the action plan along with more rigorous and cohesive student goals for problem solving.
- The principal and staff regularly evaluate and adjust curriculum and instructional practices to meet the academic needs of students to accelerate learning for all students.

- The school has systems in place to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the quality of the curriculum provided to the students. For example, after examining the results of running records for reading comprehension, it was determined that staff development was needed so that all teachers were coding in the same manner. Additionally, after evaluating reading comprehension results and observing children's responses, it was determined that children needed additional instruction on using accountable talk to better comprehend text. Likewise, after analyzing the results of social studies assessment data, it was determined that the school needed to develop an assessment system that was congruent and aligned throughout the grades so that performance results could be accurately compared. Consequently, the school has rewritten curriculum and assessment in several content areas ensuring student needs are met and learning is accelerated.

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

- Further develop a system to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams and leadership development so that the professional growth of staff is consistently advancing.
  - Distributive leadership is apparent with the selection of team facilitators who are also members of the education cabinet. They meet with the principal every two weeks to share and discuss the work of their teams. However, despite the fact that the principal attends team meetings, there is no system generating data to regularly evaluate the leadership ability and success of each facilitator or the effectiveness of teacher teams.
- Continue the development of effective structures to regularly evaluate and adjust assessment and grading practices in order to improve coherence and communication throughout the school community.
  - The practice of regularly evaluating the English language arts and math data by administration has led to adjustments in grading practices to reflect the new Common Core State Standards. However, the structures to evaluate social studies data with a new assessment system are evolving and procedures for evaluating and adjusting the science program have yet to be developed. In addition, a proficient protocol for sharing performance data with students and families continues to develop from current structures.
- Extend communication and collaboration with parents to increase their capacity to understand and assist in their child's learning and track progress towards attaining goals and next learning steps.
  - The school communicates with parents regarding student progress in many forms including a kindergarten letter note book, teacher emails, monthly newsletters, and student goal sheets. Parents interviewed knew student goals, but did not specifically know how to help their children reach the goal, take the necessary next steps and track their progress over time. In the absence of additional parent workshops that focus on strategies for parents to support learning at home, the collaboration between the school and home has not yet reached its full potential.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

<b>School name: The Castlewood 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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?				<b>X</b>
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?				<b>X</b>
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				<b>X</b>
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				<b>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.**

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?				<b>X</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				<b>X</b>
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?				<b>X</b>
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?				<b>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.**

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?				<b>X</b>
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?				<b>X</b>
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		<b>X</b>		

**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>
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