

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

The Thomas Brown School
Elementary School R044
80 Maple Parkway
Staten Island
NY 10303

Principal: Joseph Miller

Dates of review: May 23-24, 2011
Lead Reviewer: Yvette Donald

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Thomas Brown School is an elementary school with 870 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 45% Black, 40% Hispanic, 12% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 91.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teacher support is grounded in the school's common instructional focus of literacy in order to improve teacher and student outcomes.
 - The school's focus on literacy is evident across subject areas and drives instructional decisions across grades and classrooms. Writing, as a concentration, is an integral part of instruction that is intended to accelerate student progress. Structured weekly professional development serves to build teacher efficacy in the components of English language arts, especially writing, and curriculum development. As a result, teacher practices have greater alignment to the school's focus, yielding increases in student writing products.
- The Principal utilizes data to make effective organizational decisions to ensure promote improvements in learning,
 - The reinstatement of full time out-of-classroom supports, such as literacy, math and data coaches, assures that teachers are well- supported in their efforts to meet the school's goals and promote progress. Teachers champion the efforts of these supports in their analysis of student work, to inform cohesive strategies that promote greater student achievement.
 - Understanding the challenges and constraints within the school, and building upon prior successes, the principal has programmed teachers for common planning time and teachers have agreed to dedicate time after school to collaborate. As a result, this time has provided staff with the opportunity to assess student learning, plan for instruction and develop curriculum that addresses the newly adopted Standards.
- The Principal and staff work collaboratively to ensure a calm, respectful and orderly environment so that there is increased time for learning.
 - The calm, safe, respectful and inclusive environment is a result of the tireless efforts to build a culture of respect and trust across all community members. The principal's modeling of and building upon character traits that lead to social, emotional and academic success is consistently demonstrated by staff and students. This is evidenced by a 50% reduction of incidents and occurrences both in and outside of classrooms that has resulted in more focused instructional time.
- The school has established very good communication systems for keeping parents informed of school activities and student performance in order to support learning at home.
 - The principal is committed to partnering with parents to educate the students of PS 44. To that end, he has established several opportunities to collaboratively engage parents in their child's learning. For example, grade and content-specific parent workshops and executive board meetings serve as venues to discuss curriculum changes, such as the move from America's Choice to StoryTown literacy. Computer stations bookmarked with ARIS Parent Link and E-chalk are set up at every

meeting for family use. Initiatives such as phone master, newsletters, and communications folders are intended to inform and accelerate meeting the school's attendance and academic goals. As a result, parents report they know what their children are learning, understand their performance, and can regularly communicate with school staff to support learning at home.

- Extensive supports ensure that the personal, social and emotional needs of students and parents are met, resulting in enriched learning experiences.
 - The school has established extensive initiatives and strategic partnerships to address youth development and family needs. For example, the principal's implementation of positive behavior supports and a rewards system is practiced by all teachers and staff. Parenting classes, teacher appreciation and academic supports are some of the benefits of the school's relationships with organizations such as Sun Dog Theatre, Staten Island Children's Museum, and several religious organizations, to name a few. As a result of these partnerships and the school's behavior initiatives, the school is able to offer multiple levels of social, emotional and academic support for students and families, which has resulted in a decrease in the social/emotional and behavioral obstacles that might interfere with learning,

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the curriculum in core subjects so that there is explicit emphasis on key standards across all subjects to ensure accelerated student outcomes.
 - The school is implementing the StoryTown literacy curriculum and concurrently developing units of study that are aligned to State and Common Core Learning Standards. Data analysis, done by the instructional team has identified writing as the focus of English language arts. While an instructional focus has been identified for literacy, it is not explicitly reflected in the school's curriculum map nor do tasks provide access for a diversity of learners. Also, there is limited evidence of purposeful alignment to key standards in mathematics. As a result, the rigor of academic tasks and multiple entry points for student to engage in learning are inconsistent and limited, respectively, across subjects within the school.
- Strengthen the use of data to differentiate classroom groupings and learning activities to provide appropriate challenge aligned to student achievement levels in order to accelerate progress.
 - The school's newly adopted literacy curriculum supports student groupings above, below and at grade level. The implementation of this program provides a broad understanding of student's performance levels. However, this level of attention in directing small group instruction is not consistent across all classrooms. As a result, all academic tasks do not ensure active engagement nor do they leverage student's strengths in order to promote higher levels of thinking.
- Deepen data organization and analysis to ensure that all teachers know the strengths and needs of individual and groups of students across all classrooms on an ongoing basis to support targeted instruction.

- Teachers use periodic assessment data, such as Instructionally Targeted Assessment, the Writing and Reading Assessment Profile and running records to plan for student learning. This allows for small group instruction within classrooms. However, the understanding of and application of the analysis of these assessments is limited in that it does not foster the identification of areas of need for specialized sub-groups of students such as the lowest third, students with disabilities and English language learners. As a result, individual and teams of teachers are unable to provide targeted instruction to students based on their specific areas of need, preventing greater progress for these groups of students.
- Establish greater consistency in setting and articulating long- and short-term learning goals that are explicit with next steps and shared with all students to ensure ongoing progress.
 - The school uses a variety of periodic assessments to monitor for results in literacy. These composite assessments cover a variety of areas in English Language Arts and provide teachers with general information on student progress and are periodically reviewed by administration. While this process exists for literacy, it is unclear if this process is replicated for math. The literacy information gathered does not identify specific concepts and skill gaps that are preventing them from accelerating progress. Therefore, there is limited ability to make strategic adjustments to instructional decisions during the year in order to assure the school is working toward meeting its goals.
 - Teachers diligently provide feedback to students on work products. Most of their comments are aligned to the rubrics used to assess student work. However, there is inconsistency in the grading policies; rubrics used for tasks anchored to the school's instructional focus area in English language arts differ between activities and assignments. This prevents students from understanding where they are in their learning, and the specific steps they need to take to get to the next level.
- Assure that action plans for meeting the school's instructional goals include short-term goals and measurable benchmarks so that adjustments can be made when evaluating progress. .
 - Administration has articulated long term goals for improving student outcomes. However, there is inconsistency in the staff's understanding of what these goals are, how they will be met and the part they play in meeting them. Consequently, individual and teams of teachers are unable to set meaningful short term goals for their key groups of students. In addition, it is unclear as to how these goals are being monitored or if mid-course corrections need to be made in order to assure that the school is on target to reach their anticipated outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: The Thomas Brown 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