

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

The Courtlandt School

Elementary School 001

**335 East 152nd Street
Bronx
10451**

Principal: Jorge Perdomo

Dates of review: October 27-28, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Courtlandt School is an elementary school with 698 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 23% Black, 75% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 1% multi-racial students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. 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 school uses data to assess and track students' progress and make initial adjustments to school wide plans to support increased progress in students' writing.
 - The principal collaborates with teacher teams and individual teachers to review periodic assessment data in order to track students' progress during the year. As the principal visits classrooms, he shares information with the teachers on specific students. The principal also models strategies that the teachers can use to adjust teaching strategies to elevate comprehension, such as asking probing questions as students "turn and talk" to discuss their assigned topics. The teachers use conferencing as another tool to track student progress and give feedback to students and families as they design next steps for growth.
 - Teachers use data from student work samples to track their writing performance and set learning goals. Individual teachers meet with students to review their writing samples and provide feedback for next steps. This use of data supports the school in making initial adjustments to instructional strategies that are reflected in an improvement in student writing products.
- The school has a positive learning environment where staff, students, and parents feel welcomed to form part of a community where ALL are learners and their academic and social emotional needs are a priority.
 - Parents feel the support from the school through the frequent workshops on parenting skills, leadership programs, and extracurricular activities that serve as a base in developing healthy social emotional learning skills for their children. The communication with the school and the manner in which the staff treats them are convincing traits that the school is a good learning environment for their children.
 - Students indicate they like school because their teachers are nice and they help them learn. Every morning, they collaborate in the cafeteria by performing exercises together to stretch their minds and bodies in preparation for a successful learning day. As a result, you see students full of energy with a positive disposition and ready to learn.
- Classrooms are equipped with technology, which enhances teacher practice and stimulates student participation leading to increased student engagement and higher learning outcomes.
 - Teachers and students use a variety of technological devices in the classroom as support structures to students' learning styles and differentiated instruction. The use of technology is common usage in the daily delivery of lessons and encourages students to help one another, think, and problem solve resulting in positive learning outcomes.
 - Teacher teams meet regularly to discuss individual students' needs aligned to the instructional goals that will help them excel. As teachers discuss student work, they take into account formative assessments,

teacher observations, and other viable strategies incorporating the technology in class to make decisions that affect student performance.

- School leaders provide differentiated professional development opportunities for teachers aligned to the analysis of student data resulting in an increase in student outcomes.
 - The administration has a strong belief in teacher empowerment. Once teachers complete their student data analysis, they submit their goals and their professional development needs to the administration. Observations from the administration and inter-visitation feedback by teachers serve as rich discussions leading to in-depth instructional support resulting in differentiated teacher professional growth and the improvement of student performance.
 - School leaders encourage ongoing feedback from teachers to ensure that the professional development offered on-site and/or off-site attends to their needs. Teachers' feedback results in the assignment of coaches, visitations, and adjustments in the professional development sessions to meet teachers' differentiated and tiered learning needs.
- Teams of teachers consistently gather and analyze a variety of data as they discuss student work and share practices to meet students' academic needs resulting in an increase in learning outcomes.
 - All teachers are involved in the collaborative inquiry process. The administration has given teachers the sense of ownership to delve into the data, make decisions around the targeted students and determine the group's instructional focus. Teachers appreciate that the school leaders are confident in their use of data to make decisions that will help improve student outcomes and enhance their delivery of differentiated instruction.
 - As teachers discuss individual student work, they analyze the formative and summative assessments to create a clear picture of the student's strengths and areas of need. In addition, teachers share wonderings and strategies on how to 'attack the issue'. This exchange of ideas, experiences, and strategies encourages more collaboration amongst teachers, enhances teacher practice, thus resulting in improved student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Build on the initial stages of differentiated instruction and challenge students' critical thinking skills via consistent, rigorous instruction in all classrooms.
 - The Network provides the school with ongoing professional development in differentiated instruction. Although teachers plan differentiated lessons for students, the level of rigor varies in the tasks, resulting for the most part, in students completing tasks which do not challenge or require much critical thinking. Thus, the efforts to raise student achievement are limited.
 - Although the present units of study are becoming aligned to the Common Core Standards and students' needs, there is a lack of evidence that the differentiated lessons consistently engage all students in high-level work challenging them to think critically and produce meaningful work accordingly.

- Provide opportunities that are more purposeful for students to become critical thinkers and owners of their learning process resulting in high-level work products and intellectual independence.
 - The school provides students with opportunities to discuss social issues on the school's talk show or learn how to make healthy food choices. While students engage in these activities, they have yet to make a connection between the impact of this learning and the responsibility they have in taking their learning to a higher level of understanding. As a result, the lack of rigorous academic discourse negates students the ability to engage in a higher level of discussion about what they are learning.
 - As students 'turn-and-talk' or work independently in classrooms, they duly engage in discussions and conversations. However, the level of the discussion does not push students to engage in complex habits of thinking that can lead to their sense of inquiry and discovery to increase academic performance.
- Ensure that teacher feedback to student work across all areas is consistent so students understand their goals and next steps towards improvement.
 - Analyzing student work is at the core of the school goals. Teachers engage in discussions around the trends they observe in student work. As they analyze and offer feedback to colleagues, they set individual goals for students and teachers. However, while the feedback intends to improve student performance, it lacks in-depth details that clarify to students the next steps to take towards improvement. Consequently, there is a lack of consistency in students' understanding of what they need to improve on and how they will get there.
- Continue to solidify teacher self-reflection and self-monitoring of instructional decisions and their impact on classroom instruction and their growth.
 - As teachers collaborate in their weekly team meetings, they offer feedback to each other on teaching strategies and ideas. In addition, formal and informal observations provide teachers and school leaders with a wealth of information to improve classroom practices and student learning outcomes. However, the school lacks a systemic process where teachers reflect on their practice and connect their goals to the student work at hand, in order to build sharpened adult capacity-building.
- Ensure that the process of evaluating curricular and instructional decisions is systemic, rigorous and understood by all teachers, resulting in improved student learning outcomes and capacity-building practices.
 - The school has in place a variety of curricular and instructional processes to improve teaching and learning. In spite of the varied venues of learning such as study groups, differentiated staff development, goal-setting, and analyzing student work by teams, there is a lack of coherence in the school-wide evaluation of these processes and its impact on student learning and teacher professional growth.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

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| School name: The Courtlandt 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. | | | | | | | |
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| <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 |