

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Parkside Preparatory Academy
Middle School K002

655 PARKSIDE AVENUE
BROOKLYN
NY 11226

Principal: ADRIENNE SPENCER

Dates of review: October 25-26, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Veronica Yurcik

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

M.S. 002 is a middle school with 432 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 84% Black, 10% Hispanic, 3% Asian students and 3% other students. The student body includes 12.9% English language learners and 15.7% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Comprehensive data collection and analysis clearly illuminate overall school-wide needs and result in targeted instructional and organizational adjustments that foster positive changes in both student and staff performance. (2.1)
 - o Astute analysis of teacher performance data indicated that only a minority of teachers contributed to improved student performance. As a result, the school created a differentiated professional development plan. Subsequent teacher growth or lack thereof now informs teacher evaluation, tenure and retention decisions. Analysis of subgroup data for English language learners and Students with Disabilities not meeting Annual Yearly progress revealed that these student groups required more time on task to achieve academic success. Thus the school provided additional periods in English and math and attributes a rise in math scores to the increased time on task and remedial support. Specifically, the school increased scaffolded support for its English language learners increasing use of graphic organizers and chunking of performance tasks and hired language paraprofessionals to support these students. The school credits these strategies and the creation of a special class for English language learners as a contributing factor in doubling the number of students passing the New York State English as a second language assessment test for English language learners. In addition, the principal notes that closer scrutiny of student performance data led to increased student mainstreaming and reassignment of teachers based on their discipline strength resulting in improved scores for students with disabilities.
 - o Intentional data collection and analysis of attendance, discipline, academic scholarship, and parent input spurred thoughtful responses including a re-focused advisory emphasis on personal responsibility and growth, the addition of remedial periods and the shifting of teachers programs. These adjustments have resulted in on-track progress toward meeting school goals, such as improved attendance rates, improved school tone and incremental growth in English and math scores over several years.
- Effective management of resources supports school goals and provides meaningful learning opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning. (1.3)
 - o The school makes tactical decisions about use of resources include proactive grant-writing, partnership building, delegation of school-wide responsibilities, and strategic hiring and teacher assignment. Consequently, successful grant awards and external partnerships have provided a new computer lab, classroom laptops, research based software for remediation, extensive after-school programs and a new cooking lab that serve to motivate and engage students daily. A math coach was hired to lead work in developing performance math tasks that has led to improvement in the quality of student thinking, the integration of performance tasks across the department and rising math scores. Team assignments for curriculum development in English language arts have resulted in on-going unit adjustments to support common core expectations. Key teachers attempt to push colleagues thinking and learning through shared analysis of student work products and through intervisitations, raising collective accountability for improving student learning. Intensive support to a new charter school on-site has ensured a peaceful and productive school environment. Careful analysis of teacher strengths and

weaknesses informs teacher assignments and pairing that has resulted in improved management, pedagogy and student outcomes.

- Unwavering emphasis on development of a positive school culture supports a safe and inclusive environment, nurturing both student and adult personal learning needs. (1.4)
 - o The school carefully analyzed its annual school survey and responded with focal efforts on safety and environment through lesson development, advisories, anti-bullying education and monthly assemblies enabling the school community to understand and handle conflicts better, resulting in a decline in student suspensions. This calculated response precipitated a positive gain and above average scores in every category surveyed.
 - o The principal has established forums where students are able to express their concerns. Students speak with pride about their school describing how teachers help them academically and personally, assisting them to set academic goals that motivate their learning. They trust their teachers, assistant principals and principal and express appreciation that their concerns are addressed. As a result they have a voice and participate in school wide decisions.

- Supervisors regularly use the observation process to collect evidence that supports evaluation, informs teacher capacity building and furthers distributive leadership. (5.4)
 - o The principal is assiduous in maintaining a daily schedule of classroom visitations and regular review of assessment results. Increased emphasis on student data has resulted in one-on-one post assessment meetings with teachers where student performance concerns are noted. Informal observation write-ups and individual teacher follow-up action plans are reviewed by the extended cabinet. These systems are improving evaluation, retention and support decisions. In addition, after school village meetings provide teachers with feedback on school-wide performance, make expectations clear and foster increased capacity as teachers work to improve pedagogy.
 - o Regular meetings with lead teachers enable supervisors to evaluate their impact on influencing colleagues' instructional practices and to provide timely intervention where needed. Clear supervisory messaging strengthens distributive leadership. As one teacher described, "You are given responsibility and take the lead...from day one you are encouraged to be a leader." As a result, focused curriculum work, development of common assessments, peer intervisitations and analysis of student work are growing practices guided by these key lead teachers.

- The school evaluates its assessment practices and makes needed improvements that increase coherence of policies and practices. (5.2)
 - o An expanded cabinet regularly reviews scholarship, interim assessment reports, and curriculum. As a result of the cabinet's study and influence, the school's grading policy is being adjusted, additional common assessments are being crafted by the English department, and lead teachers are working to implement the expectations of common core within their departments. In addition, attendance, safety and discipline teams have deadlines for regular reporting, insuring that data is current and useful in shaping policy judiciously.

What the school needs to improve

- Reevaluate curriculum and lesson plans to insure that all students across subjects, grades, and classes engage in rigorous work tasks closely aligned to standards. (1.1)
 - While the school uses State standards consistently to create and modify course pacing charts and curriculum maps and has been actively involved in redesigning instructional units to meet the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards, it has not clearly articulated emphasis on key content standards. The principal has identified problem solving and critical analysis as focal standards; however, these have not sufficiently been translated into a calculated school-wide focus emphasizing the learning and skills needed to close the achievement gap and to meet academic standards.
 - Lead teachers develop and provide challenging learning tasks that emphasize critical thinking skills; however, such tasks are not consistent within and across all subject departments so that all students can be actively engaged in cognitive tasks that build necessary skills to meet grade level academic performance standards.
- Extend teachers' capacity to differentiate and question strategically so that all learners engage in meaningful work and make academic progress. (1.2)
 - School-wide commitment to reflective pedagogy has not resulted in fully articulated changes in practice. School leaders and teachers share the belief that students' needs are best met through differentiated instruction and teachers use grouping and student collaboration across grades and subject areas. Nevertheless, strategic assignment, flexibility in grouping and standards for accountable talk are not consistent enough to sufficiently meet diverse needs of English Language Learners, students with disabilities and other students not meeting performance standards.
 - Across classrooms, some teachers engage students in rigorous academic tasks that require higher order thinking skills. For example, eighth grade special education students use precise academic vocabulary and questioning to solve problems with peers and defend their reasoning on challenging geometry performance tasks. In a sixth grade science class, students write and analyze testable questions in preparation for developing their own valid hypotheses and in a seventh grade math class students are encouraged to communicate with each other, recall previously learned math, take positions and defend their reasoning. However, in other classrooms, tasks are of low level cognitive demand. In a seventh grade English language learners' social studies class, students copy, look up definitions or sit quietly without books or resources and are unable to explain what they are doing or define the vocabulary they are using. In an eighth grade math class, only some students are engaged in responding to teacher posed questions regarding procedures for solving proportion problems while others continue to work on the "Do Now" problems. Thus, inconsistency in teaching strategies, questioning, and differentiation across classrooms gives students unequal access to curriculum and challenging tasks, hindering opportunities to accelerate their learning.
- Restructure teacher team meetings to enact a sustained collaborative inquiry process focused on improving teacher practice through an iterative process of goal setting, assessment of student work, tracking progress and adjustments to pedagogy. (4.2)

- o A majority of teachers engage in structured collaborative study using department and or standardized protocols to analyze student work and determine where and why individual students have difficulty. Inquiry process as a whole, however, is still developing since teacher work is not an iterative cycle of investigation and adjustment. In addition, while staff can describe some of the work done by a designated school inquiry team, teachers and supervisors do not identify specific learnings or resulting changes in pedagogy. Thus inquiry work has not typically resulted in any school-wide changes in teacher practice.
- o While teams do focus on aligning units of study with the Common Core, overall emphasis on analysis of assessments and student work is directed to identifying remediation and tailored Acuity practice to improve student outcomes. Thus, team work does not sufficiently address needed changes in practice and curriculum to meet specific student needs exemplified in academic performance trends.
- Improve alignment of assessments to curriculum and organization of assessment results to better illuminate trends and inform instructional modifications needed for improved student outcomes. (2.2)
 - o Teachers' abilities to analyze formative assessment results are developing with many still needing the support of assistant principals to do this analysis. Teachers use this information primarily to inform re-teaching rather than for identification of sub-group trends and their relation to pedagogy. On-going assessment checks across classrooms fluctuate, negatively affecting timeliness of adjustments to meet all learners' needs.
- Revise current annual and interim goal setting for academic achievement to ensure that goals are closely aligned to data to accelerate the learning of all students. (3.2)
 - o Teachers use school templates for creating individual student action plans. However, goals set for and by students tend to be generalized in terms of meeting a specific performance level rather than a specific measurable skill based on what a student should know and be able to do. The principal acknowledges that goals tend to be generic. Thus, current goal setting does not support the precise differentiation needed to ensure that all students are on track to mastery of performance standards.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: M.S. 002	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?		X		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?			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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?			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
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