

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Isaac Pitkin

Elementary school 159

2781 PITKIN AVENUE
BROOKLYN
NY 11208

Principal: MONICA DUNCAN

Dates of review: November 17, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Elif Gure

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 159 Isaac Pitkin is an elementary school with 892 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 44% Black, 21% Hispanic, 25% Asian, and 5% other students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 10% 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 91.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

What the school does well

- The school cultivates a safe and respectful learning environment that supports teaching and learning. (1.4)
 - The dean, family worker and the parent coordinator take the lead with classroom teachers in coordinating services related to attendance and social/emotional needs of students to ensure that each student gets one-on-one attention and related services when and where necessary. Close follow up by the administrative team through daily meetings ensure that personal development needs and attendance issues of at-risk students are resolved successfully so that students are able to focus on learning. Students indicate that they are excited to come to school and feel supported not only by their classroom teachers but named many adults they go to if they need help in and out of the school. As a result of the positive culture of the school, average attendance rate has been on the rise despite the school's highly mobile student population.
- School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to parents and students in academics, behavior, and provide supports that help students achieve their best. (3.4)
 - Parents have been introduced to the expectations of Common Core Learning Standards through parent teacher association (PTA) and school leadership team (SLT) structures, and teachers provide additional help to families through on-on-one meetings so they can assist their children in meeting the increasing learning demands. Grade 5 parents and students receive communication about specialized and screened middle school options, and provided assistance allows for completing competitive applications. Parents indicate that teachers and administrators who are available to meet with them before and after school, direct them to resources in- and out-of-school for academic and personal support. Similarly, students and teachers refer to perfect attendance and uniform initiatives, individual learning conferences with next steps, before/after school tutoring and clubs, eligibility for enrichment and intervention classes as evidence of help towards meeting high expectations. Shared belief in students' ability to overcome challenges and achieve their best suitable services resulted in the school earning extra achievement credit for their key subgroups on the school's Progress Report.
- The school engages families in reciprocal communication and provides supports to understand student performance that result in parental support for student achievement. (2.4)
 - A monthly academic and behavioral progress report, combined with parent workshops on using ARIS, allow parents to understand and monitor their children's progress towards meeting academic, attendance, and behavior expectations of the school. Parents receive detailed communication regarding their children's academic and behavioral strengths and weaknesses, and follow-up meetings requested through the communication section of the progress report allow parents and teachers to discuss clear next steps to help learning take place at home. The open exchange of specific information between parents and the school is greatly appreciated as evidenced by the communication section of the school environment survey, resulting in increased parental capacity to help support student achievement.

- School leaders make organizational decisions that are supportive of developing a professional learning community of teachers and increasing instructional capacity. (1.3)
 - Use of school funds to purchase instructional technology resources, including laptop carts for classrooms, creation of an additional computer lab, and furnishing a hands-on science classroom, has begun to increase teacher capacity for increasing instructional rigor and implementing differentiated teaching practices as evidenced by meaningful student work product displayed in the hallways. The collaborative decisions to use the extended day instructional time for teacher workshops once a week allows the school to support organizational initiatives through targeted professional development, contributes to the creation of a professional learning community, and is beginning to support instructional capacity building efforts. Creation of self-contained English as a second language (ESL) classes across the grades facilitates the school providing suitable help for this student subgroup as evidenced by their gains on last year's New York State English as a Second Language (NYSESLAT) Assessment.
- The school is developing staff expertise around guidance and advisement supports for students in order to foster academic success and personal growth. (4.4)
 - The dean and safety committee members present workshops at faculty and grade conferences on preventative discipline measures, intervention strategies, and compliance mandates for student well being. Developing external partnerships include the Target Family Literacy Grant for Family Reading Night, Brooklyn Public Library, and its Kid's Mobile Library. The District Attorney's Office anti-bullying workshops, which are combined with school-based before and after school clubs such as Boy's Book and D.I.V.A., and the implementation of the 4R's Character Education program, are beginning to provide real world learning opportunities to accelerate academic and personal growth of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish curricula that cognitively engage a variety of learners through consistent opportunities for authentic, rigorous learning experiences, resulting in deep thinking and meaningful work products. (1.1)
 - The school has recently begun a curriculum mapping process to align reading and writing to key standards, and it has made some strides in designing literacy tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, particularly in argumentation. These learning experiences however, do not consistently call for students to engage in rigorous thinking and/or use higher-order skills to produce meaningful work. Although the curriculum maps reflect initial thought to engage a diverse group of learners through basic extension activities, learning tasks are not refined using student work products so that the level of cognitive engagement can be assessed and supported for lower achieving students through curricular revisions and increased scaffolds. This results in missed opportunities to maximize students' engagement and leverage the curricular revision process for increased outcomes, particularly for key student subgroups.
- Increase teacher capacity to offer differentiated instructional strategies and learning designs that offer equal opportunities for all learners to engage in purposeful thinking and participation. (1.2)

- In some classrooms, teachers utilize a variety of differentiated strategies including flexible groupings, use of real life objects and visuals, and tiered questioning, thus allowing diverse learners to enter the learning process at their level and produce work products that show general and at times high levels of thinking. In other classrooms, differentiation efforts remain surface level, mostly limited to varying the length of an end product or simplifying completion instructions of a task, resulting in minimal level of cognitive engagement and discussion.
- Improve the alignment of assessments with curriculum and integrate ongoing learning checks during lessons to adjust instructional practices for increased outcomes. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams are beginning to analyze current tasks against the expectations of chosen key standards and create their own rubrics to assess student growth and mastery. However, existing rubrics are loosely aligned with standards highlighted in the learning tasks. The existing rubrics not only fail to deconstruct the text type and scaffold the work for students by defining the skills required within the genre, but also are limited in providing feedback on the effectiveness of the classroom instruction. Furthermore, use of rubrics and checklists for peer and self-assessments during lessons as well as other ongoing comprehension checks by the teachers are inconsistent across classrooms. Some classrooms show evidence of learning checks in the form of participation routines such as thumbs up and down while others only involve yes or no questions, hindering teachers' ability to make immediate or timely adjustments to the lessons so that student-learning needs are met.
- Ensure that the progress towards school goals are evaluated, tracked, and revised consistently so that student mastery is achieved. (3.3)
 - The principal and her cabinet as well as teacher teams review and track benchmark reading and math data as well as instructionally targeted assessments and predictive assessment results to make modifications to action plans during the school year. However, grade and class level assessments used to track student progress are varied, do not allow for effective identification of common achievement trends for all students, and hinder opportunities to make timely revisions to goals and action plans so that all students can attain growth towards meeting learning goals and achieve mastery.
- Strengthen teacher feedback practices to include student data analysis to increase professional growth and to frame the existing system of staff management. (4.1)
 - Although the school leaders use frequent cycles of observation to capture teacher strengths, weaknesses, and next steps, and the connection to Danielson teacher development rubric is beginning to emerge, the process for teacher feedback and development does not include reference to student work and data analysis. In the absence of student work as the central evidence of impact of instructional practices, the system for managing staff is not yet fully developed to make informed and effective decisions around teacher evaluation, assignment, and development.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Isaac Pitkin	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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