

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

St. Clair McKelway School

Elementary-Middle School K178

**2163 Dean Street
Brooklyn
NY 11233**

Principal: Joseph Henry

Dates of review: November 29 - 30, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Ainslie Cumberbatch

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

St. Clair McKelway School is an elementary/intermediate school with 583 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 79% Black, 18% Hispanic, 2% White, and less than 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Administrators make organizational decisions aligned closely to school goals to support teaching and learning. (1.3)
 - An analysis of the latest New York State English language arts exam revealed that poor comprehension skills hampered student performance. The principal reorganized the school, aligning teacher schedules to student needs and employed a consultant in English language arts, focusing their efforts on building student use of academic vocabulary. Recent item-skills analysis of benchmark assessments and unit exams reveal an improvement school wide in student comprehension and dialogue.
 - Teacher teams meet at least weekly to review student work, analyze data, share practices and conduct collaborative inquiry. Teachers remark that these sessions are “beneficial” and support their work. Team discussions and examination of student data sets lead to a more focused approach to daily lesson planning that addresses individual student needs and includes challenging tasks. As a result, targeted groups of students are making incremental progress. Students state, “Teachers don’t get frustrated if you need help”.
- Teachers use a variety of assessment tools to provide a clear picture of students’ progress across all aspects of the school. (2.2)
 - Teachers regularly confer over a range of student performance data that include Acuity periodic assessments, unit exams, as well as school-wide benchmark assessments administered three times a year, to assess gaps in student learning and inform instruction. This practice facilitates goal setting and early intervention with identified students so that teachers are able to provide greater targeted support to students in the classroom and extended tutorials.
 - Teachers review item-skills analysis reports charting student progress on periodic assessments to identify tiered support for groups of students relative to three levels, intensive, strategic and benchmark. As a result, these subgroups receive targeted attention and demonstrate growth on running records and meeting interim goals, as noted on unit exams.
- Staff use a range of school data to monitor school needs, student progress, plan instruction and create intervention strategies. (2.1)
 - School leaders scrutinize a variety of data sets such as the school’s attendance, graduation and standardized performance rates to interpret overall school strengths and potential focus areas. Subsequently, they accumulate an abundance of information to stimulate discussion, profile school needs and guide decision-making. This information assists in setting classroom groups and shapes intervention strategies, such as the use of graphic organizers and a focus on writing in math classes.

- The instructional leadership team organizes a stream of data inclusive of authentic student work, inquiry team data from target populations and teacher exams, as well as sub-group and grade performance to identify students' strengths and areas of need. Grade leaders share these findings with teams resulting in informed decisions about instructional groups and interventions.
- Across the school, teachers participate in collaborative inquiry and use this work to strengthen instruction and raise learning outcomes. (4.2)
 - Common planning time allows all teachers to work in grade and inquiry teams to support and monitor student progress while deepening their knowledge of practice through collaboration with colleagues. As a result, teachers remark, "The team structure is valuable...cross discipline teams work because the same questions are asked in other disciplines".
 - The principal assigns grade leaders to serve on his cabinet and provide feedback to their respective teams. Team members select facilitators who organize team meetings and focus discussions around teacher practice and student progress. As such, these significant leadership roles build school level capacity and encourage staff buy-in of initiatives.
- School leaders and faculty establish clear systems for evaluating the effectiveness of support structures that affect teaching and learning. (5.4)
 - Administrators assess the work of teacher teams during discussions with grade leaders at instructional team meetings, through regular review of team minutes and feedback from facilitators during weekly debriefing sessions to ensure coherence across the school. As a result, school leaders provide timely feedback around proposed strategies and initiatives, which lead to actionable next steps such as refining the work of the math and literacy consultants, or identifying resources to address student needs.
 - Grade leaders and facilitators meet with school leaders weekly. This structure allows administrators to measure and monitor the effectiveness of team progress, assess grade leaders, facilitators and teacher needs and develop school plans that affect instruction in a distributed leadership model.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop greater coherence and alignment between curricula and State standards to ensure that all students make progress in their learning. (1.1)
 - Curriculum maps that align to State standards exist in the core content areas, include strategies for grouping, and differentiated instruction. However, this alignment does not always lead to teacher practice and rigorous work that promote higher-order thinking skills. For example, teacher questions in one class were low level, "Total means what?" And, "Who is Michael Jordan?" As a result, not all students stretch their thinking, which varies the level of student growth across the school.

- Teachers engage in planning to align curricula to the evolving State standards to address the needs of varied groups of learners. However, the primary focus of the curricula is skill development, which limits opportunities for students to engage in academic tasks that promote critical thinking. As such, students receive fewer chances to show deep understanding of content or develop competency on given standards.
- Deepen differentiation of instruction based on data so that all lessons provide appropriate challenge and maximize progress in their learning. (1.2)
 - Teachers provide differentiated instruction using a variety of intervention strategies based on student performance. For example, in a seventh grade math class on ratios, students were allowed to record information for small group discussion and large group share out using chart paper, or other methods and in a third grade math class working on division of three digit numbers, students were grouped by skill level and tasks varied according to groups. However, the level of differentiation varies across the school with all students in some classes receiving the same instruction and material regardless of need. As a result, not every student has their needs met.
 - All teachers work in grade and inquiry teams to analyze data, develop strategies and monitor student progress. However, teamwork has not yet led to high levels of engagement and rigor in all classrooms. Subsequently, student participation and performance are inconsistent across the school.
- Develop a clearer instructional focus to guide the observation process, support teacher practice and facilitate student growth. (4.1)
 - School leaders monitor the quality of instruction to ensure that it aligns to student needs and is standards-based. However, feedback to staff does not always provide guidance to strengthen teacher practice. As a result, the implementation of instructional strategies to improve student achievement varies across the school.
 - Administrators conduct a professional development survey at the beginning of the school year to identify staff needs and offer a menu of supports available through consultants and the school's network. However, teachers report that this assistance does not always target their specific needs. Consequently, this approach suppresses the spread of effective school-wide instructional practice and opportunities to provide students with a full range of teaching and learning strategies.
- Enhance professional and leadership opportunities for staff to synchronize discussion of practice with classroom instruction and student achievement. (4.3)
 - The school has a formal professional development plan created to develop teaching skills and drive practice to improve instruction. However, the majority of staff development activities are generic and opportunities are limited to sessions for selected staff. As a result, the school does not offer a range of support to significantly improve content knowledge and teacher practice to affect student learning.

- Teachers lead various school teams and a few perform multiple roles at the school. However, administrators do not encourage all staff to step up as teacher leaders or provide forums within the school. Consequently, efforts to develop a clear succession plan for key leaders are limited.
- Expand the system for evaluating and adjusting assessment practices to ensure coherence school wide between policies and practice. (5.2)
 - Teachers examine student work and assessment results. However, they do not yet regularly evaluate the alignment between instruction and all common assessments to judge the effectiveness of teaching and learning based on school-wide initiatives. The focus on remediation, rather than the implications for teaching across the school based on the data reviewed, reduces the school's ability to make timely revisions to the curriculum to foster greater student progress.
 - The school issues progress reports to students once a month but parent feedback is minimal. Some teachers are examining an interactive online reporting system to share performance data with students and families. However, as this is not yet a school-wide initiative, not all students will benefit. In addition, all teachers do not yet use Acuity effectively, thus impeding students from understanding their next learning steps.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: St. Clair McKelway 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 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