

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. 216 Arturo Toscanini
Elementary school K216

350 AVENUE X
BROOKLYN
NY 11223

Principal: CELIA KAPLINSKY

Dates of review: November 14, 2011
Lead Reviewer: Isabel DiMola

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 216 Arturo Toscanini is an Elementary school with 552 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 17% Hispanic, 14% Asian, 55% white students and 8% other students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 14% 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 93.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty create an environment that focuses on student learning within an atmosphere of respect that embraces all members of the school community. (1.4)
 - Student success is the clear priority of all faculty and staff. A myriad of school staff; including administrators, teachers, support staff, security agents, the parent coordinator and guidance counselor know students and their families by name. Imbedded structures allow the school to address the academic and social emotional needs of individual students. Twice a week a support team meeting allows teachers and other staff to identify students that are in need of academic or emotional intervention. The team develops a plan to assist the student and in coordination with the faculty members that have a relationship with the child and family ensuring appropriate support and communication. As a result, student incidents are declining, attendance is increasing, and students, especially those identified as at risk, are demonstrating progress toward reaching learning targets.
 - Students demonstrate a high level of engagement and are enthusiastic about their learning. They express that the work challenges them daily and they look forward to doing what is necessary to meet their targets. Conferences with teachers allow students to collaborate on their goals and make decisions about the steps they will follow to reach their objectives. A student new to the school expresses her experience by stating, "As I got older I didn't like to learn so much, until I got here. The teachers and everybody make it interesting and let me participate in a way that makes me care about how I do." An open door policy with administration gives voice to students on school matters. For example, in response to student concerns about a lack of art options, school leadership pursued and attained grants that provide several opportunities for student to participate in the arts. As a result, students are genuinely excited about their learning and have a commitment to increasing their performance and improving their outcomes.
- School leaders and faculty ensure families and students are active partners through various methods of communication and collaboration resulting in decisions that positively affects the school's growth. (2.4)
 - Comprehensive methods of communication ensure that parents and students are engaged in continuous dialogues that help to progress the school and students toward reaching goals. At the start of the school year, parents and students receive information detailing baseline-reading levels leading to collaboration around individual and class goal setting. Parent teas afford families the opportunity to meet with teachers and discuss the yearly curriculum, units of study and the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. The school has begun to incorporate the regular issue of detailed progress reports at specified intervals throughout the school year to give parents and students a clear understanding of progress toward reaching overarching specific content strands and standards. As a result, parents, students and faculty have a shared understanding of student strengths and steps necessary to ensure movement toward reaching learning targets.

- o Parents and families are highly engaged and participatory in school decision making. An active Parent Association and parent leaders on the School Leadership Team are welcomed partners in identifying school needs and making decisions to address areas of concern. For example, when parents voiced concern that the mathematics program used at the school was not ideal for students to make the gains necessary, school leaders and faculty actively researched other options. After collaborating with all constituencies, the principal decided to introduce a new math program to support student progress in mathematics. Parents report that the principal welcomes their input and are thrilled with the new program that gives students more time on key topics. Unit and common periodic assessments are showing that students are making progress in key strands of the math curriculum compared to last year's summative assessment scores and baseline scores from this school year. Consequently, there is a strong-shared commitment to decision making that benefits the needs of students and continually propels the school forward.
- Teacher pedagogy demonstrates instructional coherence, multiple curricular entry points, and differentiated practices resulting in student engagement. (1.2)
 - o Instructional coherence across the school is evident in all classrooms. A workshop model of instruction permeates all content areas allowing progression of skill and content mastery across all grades. Data analysis of assessments leads to differentiation through flexible grouping and access to the curriculum at multiple entry points for all students and sub-groups. Scaffolding assignments and tasks allow students to engage with the material at a comfortable starting point. Some students may begin in a group with peer support, while another group works with the teacher to gain entry and advanced groups may work independently with materials that are at or above grade level providing opportunity for enrichment. All students are responsible for demonstrating ability that aligns to the standards. As a result, work product demonstrates content and skill mastery in a manner that is appropriate for individual students.
- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions that align with school instructional goals and support efforts toward improved student learning. (1.3)
 - o Leaders are strategic in the use of resources to provide students with opportunities for support in improving achievement across content areas. For example, collaboration with Edible Garden has led to the building of an elaborate, comprehensive garden where all students across all grades engage in growing and farming fruit and vegetables. The curriculum for the program aligns to the curricula of content areas and leads to high levels of student engagement. Students participate in hands on activities in planting and maintaining a garden. They are required to do research around nutrition, meal preparation while supporting students to maintain health through a balanced diet. Written and oral presentations allow students to communicate their learning and offer the school community information that has value in and out of school. Students are demonstrating improved research and writing skills as well as seeing the connections between nutrition, health and academic achievement.
 - o Programming decisions for students and teachers are thoughtful using comprehensive data analysis. Student programming is homogenous based upon student performance. This method of scheduling allows teachers to differentiate instruction strategically to target student needs. For example, grouping high achieving students together allows teachers to plan instruction and performance tasks that target strengths and deeply address the content strands to allow students to participate in enrichment activities that lead to demonstrations of

exceeding standards. Teachers of students approaching grade level can focus on accelerating the progress of these students toward reaching and exceeding standards with research-based instructional strategies. As a result, teachers can focus more specifically on the needs of similar students, ultimately ensuring that all students meet or exceed standards.

- Teachers and teams align curricula and assessments leading to analysis of outcomes that effect instructional decisions and result in improved pedagogic practice across the school. (2.2)
 - o Teacher teams are organized by grade and vertically. The teams meet at least once a week in a forum where analysis of assessments measure progress toward learning goals. Rubrics aligned to standards allow teams to norm grading and monitor alignment of tasks to standards. Vertical teams comprised of teachers and administrators share the work of the grade teams and look for patterns across the school to guide school level decision making. For example, a review of student work revealed a need to strengthen the writing of students across all grades. Based upon this finding a writing program was launched in all grades, resulting in improving writing from students across all content areas.
 - o Embedded into every lesson are several methods of assessment to check for student understanding. Teachers use a "stop and jot" that asks students to stop their work and write down an answer to a key question that provides teachers with instant information about student understanding. Teachers provide students with post it notes where they can record questions or thoughts about a concept that they turn in at the end of a lesson so the teachers can gauge student progress. Students also engage in self-reflection and consistently monitor their learning against a checklist that allows for self-recording of progress toward goals and a place to define next steps. These practices result in teachers making real time adjustments to lessons and practices that address the needs of all students.
- School leaders support teacher development and professional growth providing feedback and support resulting in improving pedagogic practice across the school. (4.1)
 - o School leaders place a priority on teacher development and engage teachers in a collaborative process to build pedagogic skill. A research-based rubric covers several areas of pedagogy including class environment, questioning and assessment to assess teacher performance. A schedule of formative evaluation provides for all teachers to receive between four and eight visits annually. All teachers evaluate themselves against chosen strands of the rubric. The supervisor takes low inference notes on the lesson during each visit. A meeting follows where the teacher again evaluates performance along the rubric and discusses the administrator's notes. The supervisor offers concrete advice for next steps to enhance teacher performance. There are clear expectations for teachers and an understanding that the practice of frequent visitation is a tool to build teacher capacity and elevate student performance resulting in an increasingly collaborative relationship between teachers and administrators around strengthening pedagogic practice.

What the school needs to improve

- Broaden curricula to ensure that instruction is consistently rigorous and emphasizes key standards across all subject areas. (1.1)

- o The school is working toward aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards emphasizing standards in literacy instruction. Units of study align to the Teacher's College Literacy program, highlight Common Core Learning Standards, and provide opportunities for high-level engaging tasks designed to promote higher order thinking of all students. However, there are inconsistencies in decision making across grades and individual classrooms to define the key standards of focus, resulting in some pockets of incoherence in identifying the reasons behind focusing on one key standard over another as a catalyst for accelerating learning for all students.
- Expand formal structures that evaluate instructional decisions to ensure they are having the desired effect on student progress toward reaching school goals. (5.1)
 - o The school collects a plethora of data throughout the school year to monitor students and sub-groups of students to understand progress toward learning targets. However, the school is just beginning to develop comprehensive, formal structures that align data analysis at key, predetermined points throughout the school year to evaluate curricular and instructional decisions and capacity building practices of teachers and administrators toward being effective in reaching school goals and meeting the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. As a result, it is unclear the impact curricular and instructional decisions are having on the progress of the school toward reaching school-wide goals.
- Extend formal structures to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams to ensure the advancement of instructional coherence and consistency throughout the school. (5.4)
 - o Although administrators are actively engaging with teacher teams and meet with a vertical team to monitor progress across grades, the school is just beginning to evaluate the work of the teams and their impact on school progress and leadership development. As a result, it is unclear how the work of the teams is influencing consistency of practice and evaluation of students across grades and in understanding the support teacher leaders need to effectively build their ability to have maximum influence over the effectiveness of the teams.
- Structure professional development opportunities to ensure alignment with school goals and to build leadership capacity consistent with individual and school-wide needs. (4.3)
 - o School leaders are purposeful in providing differentiated professional development to faculty to meet the individual needs of teachers, administrators and other staff to support their practice. Individual meetings with administrators provide the forum for one-on-one opportunities to discuss and elevate pedagogy. However, the school is just beginning to develop a long-term and yearly plan that clearly articulates a path of professional learning opportunities around building aptitude toward meeting school-wide goals through consistent, comprehensive practices that focus on the link between teacher practice and student work as the focus. Consequently, there are inconsistencies in faculty and understanding around using student work to evaluate teacher practice move the school forward in reaching goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. 216 Arturo Toscanini	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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