

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. K231  
K-8 school K231

5601 16<sup>th</sup> AVENUE  
BROOKLYN  
NY 11204

Principal: Christina Foti

Dates of review: November 18, 22-23, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Donna Dimino

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S. K231 is a K-8 school with 273 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 50% Black, 25% Hispanic, 3% Asian students, 21% White and 1% other students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 82% of the students enrolled and girls account for 18%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 88.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and staff work as a unified team to create a safe and respectful learning environment that works to ensure social/emotional growth for students and staff. (1.4)
  - A consistent system of social/emotional programmatic supports, including Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) and Emotional Literacy, is woven into the culture of the school and is used to create a safe environment that leaves students positioned for learning within and outside of the school walls. Structures are in place to support a coordinated and timely response to behavioral needs. For example, since analysis of data revealed that a significant number of OORS (Online Occurrence Reporting System) high-level incidents were occurring on the bus, school-based social/emotional tools and strategies were linked to the bus setting. The school instituted a system to address this issue that included the training of bus staff, intentionally designing student seating plans, instating positive reinforcers attached to bus behavior, utilizing parent outreach and dividing students into bus teams led by teachers who review expectations, solve social issues and provide weekly incentives for appropriate behavior. As a result, there has been a dramatic 27% decline in incidents overall, including those on the busses, contributing to the school's removal from the persistently dangerous list.
  - The school maintains a highly responsive and proactive therapeutic environment that supports the education of the whole child and knowing students well. Related service, guidance and behavioral support personnel are responsible for assuring that those students with consistent challenges, both instructionally and behaviorally, are well known by staff, and issues are addressed either proactively or in a timely manner. For example, a round robin basketball tournament was created to reward students for decreases in behavioral infractions. This has led to more focused instructional time within classrooms allowing for a deeper focus on learning.
- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions across various aspects of the school to support ongoing student and adult learning. (1.3)
  - The school's professional learning communities are a forum for driving professional growth in a way that is consistent and meaningful for groups of teachers. School leaders have assured that weekly teacher team meeting time is programmed for every staff member in order to create a culture of learning for the adults. Together with the UFT, one professional administrative period per week for teacher team meetings was brokered. An additional period each week has been scheduled for grade level common planning periods so that teachers support each other in planning for the grade. For example, students on the autism spectrum now use personal communication systems to have a voice throughout the day. As a result, collaborative and cross-functional teams are assuring that identified skills are reinforced across instructional environments, thereby providing students multiple opportunities to be successful.
  - School leaders have designed a tiered structure to leverage professional experiences. This is intended to improve practices that impact student achievement and are aligned to school goals. Teachers are assigned, across student service categories, to leverage successful instructional strategies across the school. Administrators, instructional facilitators, and a recently hired school

coach have each been paired with specific teacher teams to move practice forward. For example, teams have begun to study student assignments and work products to determine level of rigor and challenge. Possible modifications or adaptations to curriculum are discussed in order to promote greater student outcomes. Thus, this strategic design of supports is promoting a greater instructional focus on increasing student performance overall.

- Parents are valued as key partners in their child's education and are kept informed of school programs and their child's needs in order to promote student progress. (2.4)
  - The school fosters strong relationships with families. Phone calls, emails and communication notebooks are some of the most common ways that teachers and other support staff keep parents apprised of student learning and progress. These communication notebooks contain information regarding progress made toward IEP goals and overall behavioral and academic performance. For example, parents celebrate the progress their non-verbal children have made using communication devices based on prompt-fading and have supported this learning at home. Such strong communication ties allow families the ability to reinforce what their child learns in school at home.
  - Parental involvement has increased considerably under current school leadership. The School Survey boasts 86% participation by parents, a 33% increase from the previous year, which is well above the city average. The school sent out its own survey to solicit information around what families need, allowing the valued parent coordinator to more effectively address and support parental concerns, as well as assure that their voice is heard in relation to school policies and activities.
- The school leadership has used a variety of data sources to inform clearly identified goals that foster a culture of learning and focus on how to accelerate progress in a way that is understood by the school community. (3.1)
  - Administration analyzes school-wide documents, summative and periodic assessment item skills data, complimented by data from other selected formative assessments including ABLLS, leading to the development of targets to improve English and mathematics performance for all students of both standardized and alternate assessment. These focused, data-driven goals have been developed as part of a collaborative process with input from key stakeholders including a range of staff and parents. This is the result of the administration's concerted efforts to foster collaboration and buy-in for goal-setting and action planning from all stakeholders through efforts such as a retreat last year. School-wide goals further serve to inform teacher team inquiry goals. Across the school a lesson planning structure is used to align curricular goals to instructional goals and individual student IEP goals. The Comprehensive Education Plan's academic goals are supported by the school's goals around social/emotional learning as they work in tandem to foster a culture that can accelerate student achievement. As a result, there is clear focus and practice across the school for how to accelerate student learning.
- The school has evaluated and revised key curricular and organizational decisions to increase coherence of policy and practice across the school. (5.1)
  - Administrators and teachers are committed to an ongoing process of gathering and reviewing evidence around school improvements that impact students' academic, physical and social/emotional progress. The school serves a subgroup of students who

receive day treatment services by a co-located agency for profound emotional challenges. In the eighteen months since the principal's appointment to the school, a well-coordinated system has been developed to address safety issues at the school. For example, when analysis of incident data disaggregated by classroom indicates a behavior trend by the PBIS team, they respond by working closely with the identified teaching team, instructing them in appropriate positive behavioral support strategies that have limited interruption to learning. School trainers also provide behavior management trainings for parents so that consistency of self-regulation strategies transfers from school to home, further reinforcing student self-regulation. As a result, the school has lowered level 4 and 5 incidents and has been removed from the persistently dangerous list, a ranking the school held for several years prior to the current principal's appointment.

- A variety of performance data is analyzed to identify students' academic learning needs, including interventions to close the achievement gap. An intervention program piloted last spring yielded an average of a 30% increase within 1 reading level after twelve weeks of instruction. This program has now been purchased to target intervention needs for an additional identified student subgroup. Additionally, the PBIS team's data analysis matched academic with behavioral data to further validate the impact of the program. As a result, larger numbers of students continue to demonstrate progress as they prepare to meet the increasing challenges of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Formalize the structures of the teacher feedback loop so that a clear picture of strengths, areas for improvement and next steps that can be captured and used to accelerate professional growth. (4.1)
  - All teachers are purposefully matched to an instructional leader with new teachers assigned to a mentor based on specific areas of need. Professional support is provided in the form of formal observations, coaching, external and internal professional development opportunities and a formative observation process with focus on specific competencies based on the Danielson rubric, a transition from the school's prior use of the Santa Cruz model. The school has articulated a set of core values that outline a school-wide expectation around the implementation of practices to maximize effective teaching and learning. These are what anchor much of the informal feedback the administration shares with staff on a daily basis, and the school is beginning to develop a more effective system around how they formatively capture teacher strengths, needs and next steps. However the feedback loop as a formalized system lacks clarity. As a result, there are missed opportunities for regular analysis of trends for individual and subgroups of teachers in order to drive targeted professional learning experiences and the communication of actionable next steps, thereby minimizing the school's ability to support student mastery.
- Develop a cohesive system to use assessment data, gathered at the classroom level, to clearly identify and address students' academic needs. (2.2)
  - The school has strategically chosen core curricula aligned to the CCLS as well as specific intervention programs to address achievement gaps and promote successful teaching and learning, particularly in English language arts and mathematics. Additionally, during professional learning team meetings, teachers work collaboratively looking at data sources to determine the rigor of tasks with the intent of refining plans generated from these curricula in order to meet the needs of a variety of learners. However, the school is at the beginning of

structuring a normed and focused process that looks at student work to reflect on tasks and levels of rigor and are beginning to evaluate teacher practices on a level that leads to school-wide adjustments that target learning gaps identified when current outcomes are set against the CCLS. As a result, there is no consistency in the rigor of what students are being asked to produce across classrooms leading to inconsistent academic progress for all student subgroups.

- Build on the curricula and the structure of teacher teams so that there is an effective system for vetting tasks and using student work to refine instructional plans. (1.1)
  - School leadership and staff have developed curriculum maps with respective pacing calendars that serve as guidelines for academic learning across the organization. The maps are driven by select core programs aligned to the CCLS that have been chosen based on student needs with staff input. As all staff work to promote higher order thinking, they examine student work products to promote understanding around rigor. For example, during learning walks a review of bulletin board products informs conversations about levels of task rigor with individual teachers. While identified core programs support the maps, they do not consistently highlight key standards or provide specific guidance to structure planning around higher order thinking. There is no coherence in how the selected curricula are refined so that rigorous academic tasks are planned across grades, cohorts and subject areas. As a result, how the school understands planning for rigorous instruction against the evolving state standards is inconsistent across classrooms. This hinders the school's ability to close the achievement gap for all students.
- Promote consistency in effective teaching practices and how teachers provide challenging tasks to students that extend thinking and lead to more rigorous, authentic work products. (1.2)
  - Clarity of teaching is how the school believes students learn best, and school leaders articulate a set of core values around effective practices in planning, delivery of instruction, questioning, checks for understanding and guided practice. However, there is not yet a consistent and unified understanding of these beliefs, how they manifest during planning and instruction, or how they impact on cognitive engagement. This prevents all teachers from assuring students are provided with access to learning and are engaged in meaningful experiences resulting in authentic work products.
- Develop clear goals and structures to ensure that the work of collaborative, inquiry-based teams supports school-wide goals and focuses on improved student achievement. (4.2)
  - The school has worked with the UFT to engage all staff in structured team collaborations and promote shared leadership by soliciting teacher input on the designation of the site unit coordinator as team facilitator, expanding that role to one of instructional leadership. Each team consists of classroom teachers, cluster teachers and service providers as they have been strategically assigned by the school leadership to leverage the work across stakeholders and maximize consistency of student learning across settings and services. While student products and item skills data are analyzed collaboratively to inform an evolving improvement in teaching practices to increase student performance, there is inconsistency in the way that staff work. Lack of a formalized structure around inquiry to surface gaps and take ownership for revisions to planning and teaching practice is leading to missed opportunities to more effectively reach achievement targets for students.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. K231	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<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
<b>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.</b>				
<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	
<b>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.</b>				
<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		

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?		<b>X</b>					
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		<b>X</b>					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>