

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. 249 The Caton
Elementary school K249
18 MARLBOROUGH ROAD
BROOKLYN
NY 11226

Principal: Elisa Brown

Dates of review: January 10-11, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Simmons

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 249 The Caton is an Elementary school with 747 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 3. The school population comprises 41% Black, 44% Hispanic, 2% White, 4% Asian students and 9% other students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 94%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions that align with the school's instructional goals and support efforts toward improved student learning. (1.3)
 - The principal has creatively scheduled multiple opportunities for teachers to meet in order to support increased exposure to data analysis. In addition, experienced teachers facilitate professional development with several classroom teachers so that these teachers may gain ongoing, hands-on professional development that supports their growing understanding of Depth of Knowledge. The school has targeted the use of challenging questioning to push student thinking as one of their long range goals. In order to meet this goal, the principal has focused professional development around effective questioning techniques through the Depth of Knowledge rubric. Teachers experienced with the use of this rubric are tapped to facilitate on-going professional development with selected staff. As a result, 63.3% of students scored at levels 3 and 4 on the English Language Arts Assessment (ELA).
 - Aligned organizational decisions firmly support the school's expectation for academic excellence and teacher scholar. Accordingly, cluster teachers push into third grade classes daily for an hour to decrease class size and provide academic intervention services to targeted students. To that end, all third grade and cluster teachers are aware and collaborate on the performance of their students. This creates optimum academic conditions conducive to both teacher and student success as evidenced by their exceptional gains for students with disabilities, English Language Learners and Black and Hispanic male students on the NYS English and Mathematics Assessments.
- The school cultivates a safe and caring learning environment that supports academic and personal growth of adults and students. (1.4)
 - Administrators are using data effectively from last year's attendance to guide improvements by adopting measures, such as acknowledgements through staff e-mail and newsletters, to ensure that all staff members are kept abreast. All staff is responsible for attendance. The cabinet reviews weekly and monthly attendance levels via ATS, RCUA and RSAL which are internal Department of Education attendance data reports. They consult with the ATS Coordinator/Family Worker on attendance issues and outreach efforts. The attendance teacher follow-up on unresolved school level 407 cases and make home visits. The School Aides collect ATS forms, call parents and communicate with classroom teachers. The Pupil Personnel Secretary enters into ATS registration/discharge information and communicates with the cabinet on attendance concerns. The Guidance Counselor meets with staff, students and families regarding absences and lateness. The Family Assistant scan and log in attendance while generating 407 cases when needed. To further push the attendance initiative, attendance is recognized daily, weekly and monthly by the classroom teacher and on a school wide level through attendance awards, prizes and recognition of classes during assembly programs. As a result, attendance has surpassed their peer group by over 3.6% as evidenced on the New York City Learning Environment Survey.
 - Students are interested and engaged in their learning and indicated the desire to succeed when interviewed. Students write their own goals and each goal is

signed by the student, teacher and parent. To assist the students in actualizing their goals, teachers conference and create an action plan to support students in achieving them. "I can always find help in the school." This was stated by a first grade student, and then echoed by the group of students when interviewed. Students are appreciative that they can turn to any staff member in the school to resolve personal issues that interfere with their learning.

- The school's communication and reporting systems engage families in an open exchange of information on student performance, progress and next learning steps. (2.4)
 - Teachers are using progress reports to identify student weakness and next steps. There is a separate progress report completed by teachers for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) students and are tracked monthly. The school offers Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) workshops for families monthly provided by the cabinet. In addition, the parent coordinator clarifies and inculcates the CCLS while demonstrating ways to assist parents in supporting their children. Similarly, the school communicates the outcomes and next steps to the families of students. Mid-year, the school contacts homes to share information on students that may be at risk of not being promoted. These students are offered help to improve achievement. Throughout the school year, the school offers several after-school and Saturday classes to assist students on the NYS English and Mathematics Assessments. As a result, students are clear of what they need to continue to strengthen as learners, and parents know which target areas they should support at home.
 - School leaders have created structures to support families. Correspondence which is backpacked home is posted the school's website (www.catonschool.org). Families attend workshops, such as ARIS training, to communicate and provide assistance in understanding data around student progress. Parents receive the Parent-Curriculum Connection which explains what children are expected to learn in Literacy, Math, Science, Social Studies, Health and Physical Education for each grade. In addition, the Parent-Curriculum Connection offers academic tips and websites for parents to help their children which strengthens the home-school connection to better recognize progress toward school and class expectations.
- School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to adults and children and provide supports to ensure that students achieve their best. (3.4)
 - "Where College Begins in Kindergarten," is at the entrance to the school. Colleges that staff attended are posted outside classroom doors and offices. This statement is not only germane to students. Staff is expected to hone their craft. Adults consistently and continually refine their instructional knowledge base. During the teacher team meeting, teachers shared that the school explicitly articulates high expectations through weekly correspondence, faculty conferences and vertical/horizontal meetings. On the 2010-2011 New York City Learning Environment Survey (LES) 86% of the teachers strongly agree that their school has high expectations for all students.
 - Personalized messages provide ongoing updates on events, testing data, academic strengths and weaknesses, teacher-student conferences, academic and social-emotional goals, and recommendations and suggestions to better performance. Letters sent home inform parents of activities throughout the month. In turn, parents acknowledge receiving the information with their signature and ensure assistance with their children at home. This exchange of information strengthens value placed on learning and reinforces expectations that result in performance gains.

- School leaders make job-embedded professional development available for all faculty that result in improved instructional strategies and capacity building for leadership development. (4.3)
 - The principal has established a system that prompts teachers to set professional goals at the onset of the school year. Individual teachers meet with the principal to reflect on their self-assessed strengths and areas of need. Teachers complete a professional development survey in order for the cabinet to provide support. The principal then uses this information to strategize professional development action plans with the teachers. Teachers attended workshops on: Advanced Guided Reading, Using Manipulatives & Other Strategies to Differentiate Math, Intermediate/Advanced Differentiated Instruction by Creating Challenging Tasks for Tier III Students, Basic/Advanced SMARTboards, SESIS Training, Writer's Workshop, Fountas and Pinnell Training, Developing Tier-Order Questioning, Academic Vocabulary, Lesson Planning and Creating Effective Rubrics were courses offered for the 2011-2012 school year. As a result, the services of the instructional team, writing consultant and the assistant principals are efficiently targeted to support staff in identified areas of need.
 - The principal encourages staff to practice leadership and build instructional capacity. Teacher leaders are identified per grade. The principal creates succession plans with key leaders in the building and has developed a system that involves training at least three people to ensure continuity. Teacher leaders are selected based on class data, intervisitations, ability to mentor colleagues and provide professional development to improve pedagogical practices. On the 2010-2012 New York City Learning Environment Survey 92% of the teachers feel that their principal has confidence in their expertise. As such, the school continues to evaluate organizational and instructional systems and deploy newly identified staff to potentially fill structural voids.
- The school integrates child development with families and community based organizations to accelerate academic and personal growth. (4.4)
 - The school's fundamental belief is to develop positive relationships amongst all constituencies – children, teachers and parents in the school. To that end, this serves as a guide from early childhood to older years. The school participates in Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) which is attributed to their high ratings from parents, students and teachers under the category of safety and respect. Professional partnerships provided through Medgar Evers, Brooklyn College, Long Island University and Fordham allows the school to consistently enjoy a safe and respectful environment by continually improving the levels of student engagement.
 - The principal has strategically enlisted the collaboration of several community-based organizations such as Brooklyn College for Urban Environment, Junior Achievement, Brooklyn Botanical Garden and Kid's Connection. Students enjoyed various extracurricular activities such as farm for kids. Children traveled to Vermont to live on a farm for a week. These activities expose students to direct instruction and provide real world connections. Hence, professional collaborations strengthen connections between the school's academic focus and its culture of continuous professional learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide consistent feedback to teachers with detailed reasons for their success and clear next steps for improvement that lead to increased professional growth. (4.1)
 - School leaders use a various array of observational tools to evaluate teacher effectiveness. Teachers state that administrators consistently monitor their performance with observations. However, there is an absence of a common language regarding classroom observations and their evaluation. The lack of an agreed-upon framework for teaching limits a shared understanding for teachers and administrators in order to consistently improve student outcomes and teacher growth.
 - The administrative team is visible throughout the school visiting classrooms and engaging teachers in feedback. Nevertheless, ongoing oral and written feedback does not accurately capture strengths, challenges and next steps using a research-based common framework that articulates clear expectations for teacher practice and efficiently aligns with professional goals. The principal assigns the instructional team to assist teachers but does not outline written expectations, resulting in uneven implementation and accountability. This weakens opportunities for the potential positive impact on instruction and the accurate identification of professional learning needs.
- Develop a coherent curriculum aligned to targeted State standards and engage students in challenging instructional tasks to ensure that all students participate in rigorous opportunities to increase academic achievement. (1.1)
 - Teachers align curriculum and incorporate the Common Core Learning standards to ensure purposeful learning in order to close the achievement gap. However across classrooms tasks do not consistently engage students in rigorous thinking as evidenced by student work products that seldom surpassed proficiency. The school acknowledges this trend and is consistently refining curriculum maps that teachers can use to create rigorous units of study and tasks for those students working at higher levels as they move forward. However at this point work products do not reflect highly challenging tasks. As a result, not all students are provided with supports to accelerate their achievement.
- Deepen instructional practice so that delivery of lessons, across the school, elicits higher-order thinking and extends learning for all students. (1.2)
 - The school's teaching practices are aligned and reflect a strong belief in tiered instructional practices to differentiate instruction. The implementation of this methodology of instruction and provisions for rigorous coursework to promote higher-order thinking skills are in place as evidenced by classroom observations. While differentiation is evident across classrooms, student work products and questioning are at a generic level. Thus limiting opportunities for increased development in critical thinking skills and acceleration for students.
- Examine student achievement data to identify trends and sub- group needs in order to apply strategic curricular and instructional adjustments across classrooms. (2.2)
 - Grade level teacher teams meet continually with their instructional team to analyze a comprehensive range of student data, including summative test scores, interim classroom performance and anecdotal observations of lower achieving students. Teachers are utilizing data to plan data-driven, tailored instruction for different target groups of students. However, teacher assessment practices do not reflect a varied use of on-going checks for understanding. Therefore, students' next learning steps may not be clearly articulated to increase their progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. 249 The Caton	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