

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

The Philip Livingston School

Elementary School 261

**314 Pacific Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal: Zipporah Mills

Dates of review: February 9 - 10, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Philip Livingston School is an elementary school with 817 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 29% Black, 27% Hispanic, 36% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 17% 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 93.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's rigorous and focused curriculum strategically supports student learning that is well aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. (1.1)
 - A well-embedded commitment to balanced literacy, derived from a long-standing partnership with Teachers' College, enables students at all grade levels to write independently and extensively in a variety of genres, including non-fiction persuasive essays and reports of information gleaned from several texts. In addition, equally ingrained work with 'Math in the City' exemplars provides students with math problems as seen through a real world, problem-solving lens. Fourth grade students, when presented with a problem around sharing different numbers of sandwiches, were asked to determine if the sandwiches were distributed fairly. Students eagerly shared their strategies and discussed their rationales for their choices, while the teacher served as a facilitator. As a result of these higher order experiences, all students seamlessly transition into the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards and consistently develop postsecondary readiness.
- Multiply entry points in all classrooms and across all content areas reflect the school's embedded belief that all students are capable of learning when instruction is engaging and meaningful. (1.2)
 - The school is committed to the school wide use of both the workshop model and inquiry based learning. In addition, the school utilizes "Habits of Mind" to model successful strategies. These protocols, seen in all classes and across all grades, serve as the bedrock for teacher team discussions. Because of the consistent focus on these strategies, which develop student communication skills, teachers refine their teaching to lessen teacher talk and enhance student ownership. Consequently, student-to-student discussion is a regular occurrence and students routinely use the "ask three before me" and other interactive protocols. Thus, there is a coherent understanding and implementation by all staff of best practices and instructional priorities.
 - Students in all subgroups are provided with supports so they access the same rigorous curriculum and complete the same challenging tasks. In a fifth grade integrated collaborative teaching class, students working in two flexible groups, each facilitated by a teacher, attacked a fraction problem with uncommon denominators. The special education teacher encouraged her targeted group of students, which included special needs students and general education students, to "think about something we already know; how about money?" The other teacher asked her students to note strategies that they used to solve the problem. Some used conversion to percents, others to decimals. In both groups, the students shared their approaches and successfully completed the task. Each student, regardless of group, was able to describe his/her approach and why it worked. Accordingly, levels of critical thinking are enhanced for all students, including those in relevant subgroups. Students' understanding

of math concepts has already shown an increase based on unit assessments.

- Strategic use of teacher assignments and scheduling, as well as targeted resources, enhance opportunities to address student-learning needs and achieve schoolwide goals. (1.3)
 - The school has maintained its two coaches, in literacy and math, despite budgetary constraints in order to ensure consistent, ongoing support of high quality instruction. Additionally the school utilizes its partnership with New York Cares to strengthen literacy and math skills for targeted students during the morning intervention program, and its partnership with Global Learning to provide bilingual language support for students, especially English language learners. The coherent focus of these decisions, coupled with a school-based option that allows ample time for teams to reflect on student work, ensures that teacher created assignments and the ensuing work products are both meaningful and rigorous, thereby providing the steppingstones to the achievement of school wide, long-term goals of improved student success.
 - Teacher placement decisions are determined by student needs. A strong teacher was moved from early childhood into the third grade to provide nurturing but robust instruction for students in this pivotal year. Further, two teachers on each grade serve as the literacy and math “experts” providing regular support and insight to colleagues during teacher team meetings and as models in classrooms. As a result, teachers have a strong vested interest in and commitment to the success of their students, and improved student achievement is the consistent focus for all.
- Formal and informal observations provide the data that focuses mentoring and professional support for new and experienced teachers, deepening instructional practices, and raising professional expectations. (4.1)
 - School leaders utilize frequent cycles of informal observations in addition to formal observations to identify and address the professional development needs of all teachers. Teachers are assigned to grade or content specific cohorts, with new teachers exclusively under the purview of the principal. Teachers receive feedback aligned to a research based framework that uses common language to help focus on areas that require improvement. Coaches, consultants, and grade “experts”, provide six-week cycles of professional development based on teacher requisites along with follow-up visits to monitor progress. Support includes lab-site classrooms, intervisitations, network support, training by consultants, and collaborative reflection on low-inference transcripts developed by the coach. Hence, enhanced teacher development is directly aligned to the school’s educational vision of improved student success and is in line with school wide goals, providing an organic and ongoing focus at the school.
- The school’s culture honors the diversity of its population and empowers all members of the school community to take pride in their philosophy of collaboration and respect. (1.4)
 - Thoughtfully reflecting on data from the Learning Environment Survey to target identified concerns, the administration hired a “Recess Coach” to

provide structured games and eliminate issues in the schoolyard during lunchtime. Additionally, school aides and paraprofessionals are trained in conflict resolution, and the principal and assistant principals are customarily scheduled to oversee lunch. A student curriculum, "Building Healthy Relationships," developed by the Center against Domestic Violence, helps children to build self-esteem and raise personal and academic expectations. Consequently, all members of the school community proudly describe the building as a place where "children love to come to school," as it provides the social-emotional supports needed for academic growth.

- Students are incredibly well known to their teachers and to the guidance counselor who is available to provide additional support to those who seek it. Teacher facilitated morning meetings in classrooms enable students to share concerns, which are then discussed, and resolved through well-matched, targeted enrichments, including Lego robotics, morning interventions, games, and/or activities. Responding to defined attendance concerns, the school has increased outreach through the parent coordinator and the teaching staff. As a result of these efforts, the year-to-date attendance has already increased 1%.
- Structured professional learning communities on all grades utilize the inquiry process to reflectively evaluate student work and deepen instructional practices. (4.2)
 - All teachers are engaged in grade-level teacher team meetings at least once a week. This allows staff to consistently appraise student work using a defined protocol, target a population, support them with identified strategies, and evaluate their progress. The use of the inquiry process has led to diagnosing student-learning gaps in line with the Common Core Learning Standards. First grade teachers have surfaced the need to help students understand the difference between counting and place value, and have sought to address the need through the development of targeted math games. This work has led to the refinement of the grade level curriculum to prescriptively attend to these inadequacies. Further, the meetings have raised the level of professional discussion and positively impacted teacher practice within the building. Accordingly, teacher effectiveness has improved and students have a stronger understanding of math concepts, positively impacting achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the protocol for the use of rubrics to ensure that all students have a clear understanding of their strengths and next steps. (2.2)
 - Teams of teachers and individual teachers routinely augment summative data by analyzing a broad range of formative data such as Design your Own assessments, math unit assessments, running records, teacher conferences, Fountas and Pinnell reading levels, and grade level predictive examinations using previously released State assessments, adjusting instruction accordingly. However, though there are rubrics for each writing unit, the use of the rubrics is not consistently implemented relative to other unit protocols. Thus, evaluations of student writing are subjective and not easily monitored, as other areas of the curriculum.

Thus, the ability of all students to clearly identify their next steps in writing is hindered, as is teacher ability to define and address writing trends at the grade and school level.

- Develop a school wide database that enables teachers and administrators to more easily aggregate and analyze data and identify school wide trends. (2.1)
 - Data from summative assessments, periodic assessments, and classroom level assessments, is systemically collected and reviewed by school leaders. Item skills analysis and classroom data form the basis for discussion when setting teacher and student goals as well as adjustments to the curriculum grade by grade. At teacher team meetings target population data is dissected in detail, and lowest third data defines interventions for students in need of support. Nevertheless, the school does not have a formalized database in which data is entered, and/or easily disaggregated and shared. Therefore, the school's ability to consistently and quickly monitor subgroup trends is limited. This hampers the school's capacity to improve achievement, and minimizes teacher use of technology as a valuable tool to scrutinize student progress.
- Ensure that data assessment is used consistently and effectively to define interim and annual goals in all classrooms and across all grades. (3.2)
 - Individual teachers and teacher teams, through a wide range of summative, formative and classroom assessments, carefully monitor student progress. Data is then used to develop differentiated, yearlong student goals in terms of reading level or math proficiency, incorporating rigorous achievement level expectations that are clearly defined by grade. Additionally, teams and school leaders monitor target populations, lowest third, and subgroup students. In spite of the routine analysis of data and aligned goal setting, interim goals are less uniformly defined. Though progress is noted, the degree of progress needed to achieve the final goal is less clearly identified. Hence, the level of acceleration needed to move from benchmark to benchmark is not always achieved, limiting levels of student success.
- Expand the structures for determining the effectiveness of leadership development opportunities to include data driven evaluations. (5.4)
 - School leaders use a range of methods to reflect upon the success of the work of teacher teams, such as the review of team minutes, attendance at team meetings, teacher observations, and discussions with coaches and consultants. Leaders then use these opportunities to make improvements as needed. Data from student work is also reviewed as an indication of team success. Further, these same foci are used to evaluate the school's leadership development opportunities. However, an in-depth reflection on student data, as a barometer of identifying staff for future leadership roles, is not firmly embedded in the fabric of leadership work. This has resulted in a somewhat limited picture of teacher capacity, and is preventing development of additional teacher leaders.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

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|---|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| School name: The Philip Livingston 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 |