

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Johann DeKalb

Elementary School K270

**241 Emerson Place
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: Mitra Lutchman

Dates of review: December 12 - 13, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Barbara Freeman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS 270 is an elementary school with 224 students from Pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 78% Black, 18% Hispanic, 3% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has created a trusting environment that provides students with support and voice while supporting student learning. (1.4)
 - The school community is committed to ensuring that students have contact with one adult. The principal states, “Our school is small so we know everyone.” Through their “Adopt a Student” program, the staff has an opportunity to get to know individual students and provide targeted support. In addition, assemblies and Student of the Month programs involve parents and teachers in a structure to build the self-esteem of students through highlighting academic excellence.
 - Students have many opportunities for their voices and opinions to be heard. Each class has a president that has the responsibility of bringing student concerns to the administration. Grade 1-5 students participate in the Principal’s Club where they discuss what they are learning and how to make their school a better place. These discussions frame the external partnerships the school might need to meet the requests of students, leading to funding from JP Morgan Chase, Co, robotic club sponsored by NY Poly tech, photography club funded by New York Cares and support from Pratt Institute.
- The school has a coherent curriculum across the content areas and the arts aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to support a variety of learners. (1.1)
 - Teachers participated in extensive planning at the end of last year. They reviewed curriculum maps and planning calendars and integrated selected Common Core Learning Standards based on an analysis of student strengths and weaknesses in their plans for the upcoming year. The school found a need to focus on student writing in literacy and mathematics. They have also implemented the Depth of Knowledge philosophy to increase the rigor of assignments across the school. The school has adopted specific CCLS tasks from the city provided instructional bundles and is working with their Teaching and Learning team to build the capacity of staff to begin to construct their own and rubrics.
 - After assessing student writing samples from last year, the faculty has increased the amount of writing students are required to do as well as ensure that children were performing tasks that required them to analyze and synthesize problems. The school instituted several on demand writing pieces which required students to write about specific topics before or after planned writing units to assess how much students knew about a topic or how much they learned about a topic. This enabled teachers to fine tune lessons to support where their students were as learners.

- The school articulates a belief of how students learn best and works to align teacher practice and performance tasks towards producing meaningful student work. (1.2)
 - The administration conducts conferences with all staff members to align school goals with classroom goals. The classrooms celebrate student work and reflect the importance of a thoughtful agenda throughout the day. All classrooms contain centers of interest and areas devoted to literacy and mathematics allowing students to participate in a variety of structured activities in groups, pairs, and individually allowing students to have choice in their learning while gaining the support of their peers.
 - Inquiry teams and the administration regularly look at student work and discuss student groupings within grades and classes. The process of aligning tasks and assessments to learning standards has focused teachers to challenge their accelerated students while continuing to determine the scaffolds and supports their struggling students will need to be successful in completing tasks.
- The school uses a variety of resources to ensure instructional goals are being met and the quality of student work is elevated. (1.3)
 - The administration has used the support of three per diem teachers to provide students with additional writing experiences through film, theatre and a writing cluster. Other cluster teachers push into classrooms to support teachers with newly purchased writing materials aligned to the school's goal of increasing student's writing stamina and quality.
 - All teachers are involved in inquiry work. The school schedule allows teachers to meet 3 times per week. Additionally, some teams are meeting daily. The inquiry work is focused on looking at student work, tracking student performance and coming to consensus on rubrics to assess this work. This has already resulted in standardized grading on math exemplar tasks.
- Individual and teams of teachers use a variety of assessments to monitor and adjust teaching practices in order to ensure learning for all students. (2.2)
 - Teachers consistently pose questions to students during the direct instruction portion of the lesson to check for understanding. In addition, upper grade students are supported in using teacher-created rubrics to engage in peer and self assessments. This provides teachers and students with information on what children know and don't know, as it relates to the lesson taught. As a result, teachers can use this information to make adjustments in instruction in order to meet the learning needs of all students.
 - Teachers use a variety of assessment tools to supplement students' New York State performance data. Analysis of running records in reading and end-of-unit math benchmark data identify reading comprehension and number sense and operations as strengths and writing and algebra as targeted areas of need. As a result, teachers' strategy groups and extension activities target these deficiencies to extend student learning.

- The school uses classroom observations as a means to support teacher practice and development, enabling the faculty to engage in discourse around school wide instructional practice. (4.1)
 - The school has used a research based rubric to measure teacher effectiveness for over ten years. Currently, the school is focusing on teacher planning and the use of student work as an important data tool. The integration of frequent short cycles of observation has provided immediate and actionable feedback to staff on these areas enabling the coach and administration to monitor growth and differentiate professional development opportunities, particularly for new personnel.

What the school needs to improve

- Engage families in a reciprocal dialogue about student progress and expectations to better meet the needs of all students. (2.4)
 - Currently, PTA meetings, monthly School Leadership Team sessions, and check ins between the principal and the parent coordinator are structures set up to develop the dissemination of information to parents about the progress of their children. However, there is not a developed mechanism to allow parents to reach out to the faculty limiting the opportunities for the school to receive social, emotional, and academic information from families.
 - Families are aware of tools such as ARIS Parent Link that provide them with information about their child's progress in school but the level of usage is low, restricting the information families receive about interim assessments and standardized exams.
- Continue assessing school practices to build coherence in the structures for measuring student progress and sharing information with families and students. (5.2)
 - Teachers and administration have structures to assess and adjust tests and grading in order to get an accurate picture of student progress however, they are not regular and routinely implemented limiting the ability to evaluate and make necessary adjustments to assessments and teacher practice.
 - Teachers and administration have procedures in place in order to inform families of the progress of their children but are limited in monitoring and revising structures to make the information accessible to parents and supporting the subsequent steps of student achievement.
- Intensify communication to increase understanding of school goals in order to have them supported by the entire school community. (3.1)
 - The School Leadership Team, administration, and the school cabinet set school goals to increase the rigor in student writing and to sustain the growth of on-track students across grades and subjects. However, it has not yet fully influenced changes in classroom practices limiting the acceleration of student learning.

- The school uses data such as attendance, standardized test results and conferences with students to determine the individual needs and supports needed. The school has not yet included interim student benchmarks to guide short and long term student goals reducing the ability to monitor the mastery of mandated skills and increase the rate of student learning.
- Continue to support the use of the inquiry approach in teacher teams to increase the professional partnerships school-wide that focus on student outcomes. (4.2)
 - All teachers are involved in inquiry work. Teams are involved in activities based on scoring rigorous tasks and norming rubrics. However, teams are not focused on specific or targeted student populations restraining their ability to develop supports necessary for these students to accelerate their learning.
 - Teacher leaders are selected to represent a group of teachers by grade level. These leaders have the ability to guide instructional decisions in collaboration with their teams that are then implemented in the classroom. Scheduled meetings between the administration and these teacher leaders are not currently routine, affecting the ability to influence student learning across the school.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Johann DeKalb	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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