

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Curtis Estabrook

Elementary School 272

**101-24 SEAVIEW AVENUE
BROOKLYN
NY 11236**

Principal: DAKOTA KEYES

Dates of review: March 09-10, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Elif Gure

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Curtis Estabrook is an elementary school with 722 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 82% Black, 12% Hispanic, 1% White, 2% Asian students, and 1% other students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 19% 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 90.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school maintains a safe and caring learning environment in support of academic and personal growth of adults and students. (1.4)
 - o The school day at Public School 272 begins with a morning line up where students and adults dance and sing to the motivational school song "I Believe I Can" followed by students who quickly self-manage to calm down and recite the morning pledge. Students who are identified as "Ambassadors" based on exemplary behavior during lunch and recess are also announced during this time. Interactions among adults and students are direct, respectful, and caring across classrooms. The principal and the assistant principals take the lead in knowing each student by name and closely monitor attendance, academic and social emotional needs of at-risk students. Proactive classroom teachers, the parent coordinator, and the attendance teacher, ensuring concerns around students are communicated to the parents as well as school leaders, support this process. Students report that they feel that teachers really care for them, work hard to help them succeed, and as a result enjoy coming to school everyday. Consequently, attendance has been stable at 90% over the past two years, despite the high mobility rate of the student population.
- School leaders and faculty analyze a wide range of data to track student progress, identify learning needs, and pinpoint success and performance gaps. (2.1)
 - o At the beginning of the school year, the principal, assistant principals, and teachers analyze summative data including the Progress Report and State exam item skills in English language arts (ELA) and math. Summative data analysis is supplemented by yearlong periodic assessment data gathered from instructionally targeted (ITA) and predictive assessments. As a result of the analyses, the school noticed that most of the students scoring level one in ELA and math were at the high end of the cut off score for level one. A comparison of State summative data to yearlong predictives and ITA information was used to inform groupings for the school's interventions that now encompass students who performed at the high end of level one on State exams and below the 50% range on periodic assessments. In depth formative data analysis sheds further light on the particular skills gaps in reading and math strands for individuals and relevant subgroups, with a particular focus on special needs and black male students, both of which are significant sub-groups in the school. The principal and assistant principals use the information gleaned through this process to engage teachers in the next instructional steps, including support services, interventions, and other suitable recommendations to ensure student progress.
- School leaders and teachers use common grading policies and tracking tools to gather student performance trends that inform instruction and curriculum. (2.3)
 - o Teachers and administrators use skills-based item analysis data to evaluate student progress towards mastery of skills tested on ELA and math State assessments. To streamline the grading and evaluation of student achievement, all teachers use performance levels 1 through 4 to communicate achievement levels to parents and students. Item skills analysis tools from the previous year's State tests, periodic assessments, and the school's ELA curriculum, *Reading Streets*, are utilized by all teachers to track students' skills acquisition. The administrators and coaches facilitate grade-wide dissemination of data so all

teachers are equipped to track student growth towards mastery of skills, and that the information serves as a guide as to what needs re-teaching to the whole class, in small targeted groups, or to address needs of specific student sub-groups. Thusly, teachers and administrators through this monitoring of mastery of skills, identify student achievement trends, and determine next steps for whole class, relevant sub-groups, and individuals.

- School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to adults and children, and provide supports to ensure that students achieve their best. (3.4)
 - o The sharp focus on increasing student achievement on the State assessments frame the administration's communication around high expectations to teachers, students, and parents. The administration is beginning to hold teachers accountable through one-on-one data feedback sessions following each periodic assessment. Principal and assistant principals who record the meeting notes around student successes, gaps, and next steps on data sheets, use agreed upon information to set teacher expectations that are followed up during subsequent sessions. Teachers take time to meet one-on-one with their students to communicate expectations around attendance, behavior, and achievement. Referrals for additional supports and extensions set guidelines to help students succeed. As a result, school wide efforts towards meeting end-of-year goals are consistently focused on student achievement and related supports.
- The principal makes organizational decisions that are beginning to support school goals and increased instructional capacity. (1.3)
 - o The overall school goal to improve the student achievement for all students, has a particular focus on special needs students and black males, both of which are significant sub-groups in the school. The principal hired literacy and a math coach who became content point people providing support and feedback around the inquiry process to the school's core inquiry team. Coaches also facilitate grade team meetings, data collection, and with the support of a math consultant provided by the network, deliver workshops and model lessons for teachers. One of the recently modeled strategies for problem solving was evident and readily in use by teachers and students in most of the classrooms. To further support the focus on struggling, students with disabilities, the principal made budgetary accommodations to hire a retired teacher and assigned her small groups of special needs and struggling students for intervention instruction. Students are flexibly removed from and added to this group on mastery or a needs basis, allowing maximum number of students to benefit from the small group intervention strategies. The most recent ITA results indicate that more than 50% of the students who are in the group are beginning to show progress towards mastery of the identified skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Redesign the existing curricula through teacher planning and feedback to include authentic and rigorous learning tasks that cognitively engage a variety of learners, enabling students to practice deep thinking. (1.1)
 - o The curriculum maps at the school indicate corresponding CCLS standards, big ideas and text suggestions for each unit of study, and taught curricula follow a skills based pacing calendar that drives instruction and assessment decisions. Revisions to curricula mostly involve emphasis or de-emphasis on isolated skills based on student mastery or non-mastery as indicated by periodic assessment

- data. Revisions to instructional units through teacher planning do not incorporate the teaching and learning demands of the CCLS standards and do not support the integration of the CCLS tasks. As a result, the taught curricula at the school do not emphasize rigorous habits or higher order skills, providing minimal opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking, problem solving, and active learning.
- Evaluate and suitably revise the quality of curricular, instructional, and organizational decisions, to increase the coherence of practices across the school. (5.1)
 - o Although the administration and teachers make adjustments to practices in response to student achievement levels, based on periodic and practice State test assessments, these adjustments are mostly programmatic and predominantly involve addition and/or removal of an intervention service, extended day remediation, or formalized referrals for special education services. Furthermore, there is no evidence, that there is an effective integration of CCLS or the alignment of tasks. In the absence of structures for monitoring, evaluating the effectiveness of the existing instructional and curricular practices with a particular focus on strategic alignment to CCLS, and suitably revising to meet students' needs, the possibilities for increased learning outcomes, and sustained school improvement is hindered.
 - Increase teacher capacity to create and/or utilize rigorous, differentiated instructional strategies and learning designs that offer equal opportunities for all learners to engage in purposeful, deep levels of thinking and participation. (1.2)
 - o Instruction in most classrooms reflect general alignment to "I do, We do, You do", the gradual release of responsibility approach adopted by the school, and teachers generally plan in order to differentiate based on skills analysis. However, teaching strategies, routines and questioning in most classrooms do not consistently meet the varied needs of learners, resulting in uneven levels of student thinking, participation, and work products across the school. A social studies class for special needs students, studying the Mayflower Compact included strong modeling, high level academic vocabulary scaffolds, purposeful questions of varied difficulty levels, and open ended, collaborative and differentiated application tasks which required students to explain, create and argue while making meaning and extending their understanding of the concepts taught. Similarly, a language arts class involved high achieving students in identifying author's purpose using a variety of anchor text samples, real life objects, and teacher-led questioning that led to meaningful discussion and solid student understanding of author's purpose. In some other classrooms however, students mostly engaged in solving problems on worksheets. There was minimal discussion and reasoning among students, a pattern that is reflected in other classrooms. As a result of this inconsistency, some students are engaged in collaborative as well as independent thinking and produce work that reflects their critical thinking and communicative ability, while others simply comply with the instructions on the worksheet, leading to a lack of thinking, participation, and cognitive engagement.
 - Improve the alignment of assessments with curriculum and integrate ongoing learning checks during lessons to gather feedback on the impact of classroom instruction in order to adjust instructional practices for increased outcomes. (2.2)
 - o Although teacher teams analyze periodic assessment and practice State exam results on an ongoing basis, staff are not able to identify achievement trends by grade or class, limiting the usefulness of data in determining the effectiveness of

instruction. Most data analysis focuses on the mastery of particular skills and helps identify skills that are not mastered by more than 60% of students, thus indicating the need for whole class re-teaching. Furthermore, rubrics used by teachers are mostly generic; do not unpack the expectations of the standards, nor the required skills and processes involved, limiting the credible evaluation of student work. Use of checklists for peer and self-assessments during lessons, as well as other ongoing comprehension checks by teachers, are inconsistent across classrooms. Some classrooms incorporated learning checks in the form of turn and talk, while others only involved “thumbs up and thumbs down”, hindering teachers' ability to make immediate or timely adjustments to the lessons to ensure that student-learning needs are met.

- Strengthen feedback practices around pedagogy to include a common language of clear expectations for improved classroom practices and increased professional growth. (4.1)
 - o Although school leaders are beginning to support teacher development using classroom observation feedback, capturing strengths and challenges, the feedback cycle is infrequent. Additionally, feedback given to teachers does not make suitable explicit connections to student work analysis and does not include common language of expectations around a particular practice, minimizing the clarity of feedback and instructional next steps for teacher practice. Furthermore, the school is beginning to work on building a system for managing staff development using the observation data and student work products in order to meet the differentiated development needs of teachers. Because such systems are not yet fully in place, decisions around professional development, assignment, and retention, are based on teacher request and/or anecdotal, sporadic evidence, minimizing effective differentiation of adult learning and improvements to teaching and learning at large.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Curtis Estabrook	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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