

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**P.S. 328 Phyllis Wheatley  
Elementary - Middle School 328**

**330 ALABAMA AVENUE  
BROOKLYN  
NY 11207**

**Principal: DOUGLAS AVILA**

**Dates of review: March 12 - 13, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Rose Marie Mills**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S. 328 Phyllis Wheatley is an elementary-middle school with 498 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 55% Black, 42% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 13% 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 90.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is underdeveloped.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders gather a range of summative and formative data in order to gain some understanding of students' needs resulting in school goals intended to improve outcomes for students. (2.1)
  - The principal reviews summative data from New York Start, Progress Report, and the Joint Intervention Team (JIT) report in an effort to identify the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement. A review of this data revealed that students with disabilities and English language learners (ELL's) did not make adequate yearly progress last school; hence a goal this school year is to improve their performance by ten (10) percent on the New York State assessments. This has resulted in the creation of some writing tasks designed to engage them in challenging assignments.
  - The assistant principal, who also serves as the data specialist, provides teachers and teacher teams with Periodic Assessment data. She also provides support to teams in order to steer their understanding of the performance of sub-groups in an effort to guide changes to instructional practices and student performance.
- Teacher development is guided by the use of a research-based framework that is beginning to influence pedagogical practices resulting in moderate improvements in the delivery of instruction. (4.1)
  - Administrators have begun to use the Danielson's teacher evaluation framework, a research-based rubric, to provide feedback based on short and frequent observations to guide teachers' next steps. For example, one teacher received feedback that guided her to "refer to the Depth of Knowledge wheel to assist in creating higher-order questions so that the lesson will be more rigorous". The follow up observation noted some improvement in the teacher questioning and students more engaged in instruction.
- Teaching practices are becoming aligned to the schools' belief system and the staff has begun to engage students in writing assignments that aim to meet their learning needs. (1.2)
  - The school ascribes to the workshop model of instruction and most teachers consistently utilize this model. Teachers engage students in group work and evidence of differentiating writing tasks, such as responding to informational text, is emerging across the school. A few teachers have tiered activities according to the learning needs of students, for example, in a collaborative team teaching class, students worked in four distinct groups to complete reading assignments based on their needs. The group with English language learners was provided with instructions in both English and their native language of Spanish in order to facilitate their understanding of the task. This is resulting in the completion of some meaningful learning activities.
- Teams of teachers have begun to utilize common formative assessments aligned to the schools' curriculum to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in order to meet their learning needs. (2.2)
  - The English language arts (ELA) teacher teams have created some writing assessments aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). An observed teacher team provided feedback on an assessment created by a

member of the team. The feedback focused on the alignment of the task to the standards and the specificity of the rubric to the task. As a result, the task and rubric were refined in an effort to guide students in producing a meaningful writing assessment that was standards based.

- Classroom assessment practices across the school vary from teacher to teacher. In an eighth grade classroom, the teacher questioned students' based on their presentation, while in a collaborative team teaching class one teacher wrote notes based on students performance on a group task. Pre-classroom visit discussions with teachers indicate that homework was used by many teachers as a form of assessment. The data gathered from these assessments is beginning to guide adjustments to lessons and student tasks in order to meet students' learning needs.

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

- Design a rich curriculum, to include the Arts, that targets key standards and promotes engaging tasks across all subject areas, in order to provide all learners with deep thinking experiences that raise academic performance. (1.1)
  - Curriculum mapping and creating rigorous tasks aligned to key standards is in the beginning stages at the school. Although the school was cited, in February 2011, by the Joint Intervention Team (JIT) for not having an English language arts curriculum, the work has just recently begun and is slowly progressing. There is some evidence of the development of writing tasks aligned to standards in an attempt to satisfy the City wide instructional expectations. In other content areas, curriculum alignment to key standards and integrating the Common Core Learning Standards is not yet in place. The limited development of a comprehensive standards based curriculum, as evidenced by the delayed implementation of the ELA curriculum maps, hampers purposeful decisions to consistently align and embed coherency across all subject areas resulting in students not consistently engaged in rigorous activities to advance their academic performance as reflected in student work products.
  - This school year, teacher teams led by the Assistant Principal and supported by a Network team member, have begun creating tasks in ELA that are beginning to align to key standards. However, as this work does not take place consistently, not many such tasks exist and the activities created have not been differentiated to provide the diverse range of learners in the school appropriate entry points into the curriculum. As a result, most student work products on display or evident in portfolios do not reflect opportunities for all students to be cognitively engaged thereby hindering their progress.
- Align human resources and student programming with the instructional priorities and students' learning needs to ensure that students are prepared to succeed. (1.3)
  - The schools' goals for this year are to improve students' performance on New State assessments in ELA and math by 10%. The school has allocated funding for a full time math coach to provide needed support to teachers and is documented on the school's table of organization. However, evidence collected by this reviewer confirms that in reality this position does not exist. For example, interviews by this reviewer revealed that the coach teaches Spanish, provides English a second language (ESL) instruction, and serve as testing coordinator. There is no evidence of substantive support in place to guide teacher development in the area of mathematics even though there was a six (6) percent decline in the school's overall performance in the 2010-2011 school year. The inconsistent use of funding to support an identified school decline in student

- performance lessens opportunities for teachers to build instructional practices and tasks aligned to the school's goals for student improvements. Consequently, student work products in mathematics reflect limited engagement in tasks to accelerate growth.
- Recent changes to student programming result in many middle school students not receiving advisory, science instruction, and physical education. Additionally, discussions with the principal reveal the wholesale placement of ineffective teachers in the fifth grade thus compromising instruction for this group of students. The lack of strategic student programming inhibits targeted student growth and does not support the goal to improve school-wide performance.
  - Establish a respectful and safe school culture that supports the academic and social-emotional development of all students in order to improve outcomes for all learners. (1.4)
    - Despite some success in reducing safety concerns, students and parents voice apprehension about the lack of respect and the negative school tone. In particular, the cafeteria environment is described by students as “chaotic” and “out of control” with inadequate supervision of school aides by administrators. In the absence of a respectful school culture, as articulated by students and parents, there is a strong desire for oversight and strong school wide structures to meet the social-emotional needs of the students and support an orderly and respectful climate.
    - While students speak highly of some teachers and appreciate their commitment and guidance, they express concern that the school has not yet implemented structures and routines to ensure that they all succeed. Specifically, middle grade students echo dissatisfaction with the discontinuance of the student government, and inadequate clubs and afterschool activities to meet their needs. As articulated by students, the absence of these activities makes the school “gruesome” and does not inspire learning.
  - Develop structures to improve the level of parent involvement and consistently engage families in understanding the performance of students in order to advance school-wide improvement. (2.4)
    - The school recently provided parents with a teacher prepared student progress report. However, specific details on students' strengths and weaknesses were not provided. In addition, student goals though developed by some students are not shared with families, limiting their understanding of students' strength and weaknesses. Parents express the need for workshops and activities to help them in understanding what their children are learning in schools, and ways that they can support their learning. Training on the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) has not being provided to parents since the beginning of the school year, further compromising understanding of student progress. The failure to provide families with information on students' performance inhibits their ability to be true partners in the education process, thus hindering progress for all students.
  - Strengthen the development of a school culture that consistently communicates high expectations for all students and families, thereby accelerating school-wide performance. (3.4)
    - Positive reinforcement of acceptable behavior and striving for excellence are not yet embedded into the school culture. Parent members of the School Leadership Team (SLT) voice their unhappiness with the absence of awards ceremonies that

recognize students' success in order to raise the level of expectations for students and families. While some goal setting is undertaken in classrooms, teacher teams setting specific goals for students is not yet evident. In addition, workshops to engage parents in understanding the curriculum and supports they can provide at home to foster the academic development of their children are not offered. Consequently, the lack of consistent school wide communication to convey the message of high expectations to all school constituents, specifically students and families, hinders opportunities to prepare students for college readiness skills along with parental support to achieve them.

- Create structures to consistently evaluate the use of resources and instructional decisions in an effort to ensure strong alignment with the schools' goals and students' learning needs. (5.1)
  - The school reviews and adjusts instructional decisions and the use of resources on an annual basis. There is no clear structure in place to consistently benchmark progress of the curriculum mapping initiative that has begun in order to meet the instructional expectations required for all schools. The absence of frequent, on-going checks for alignment with the school's targeted goals decreases coherency between the use of resources and student learning needs, thus hindering timely adjustments to the curriculum and learning tasks to ensure positive impact on student outcomes as evidenced in student work products.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: Phyllis Wheatley</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>	<b>X</b>			
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?	<b>X</b>			
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?	<b>X</b>			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?	<b>X</b>			
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?	<b>X</b>			
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?	<b>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.**

<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**

<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>
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