

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Alejandrina B. De Gautier

Elementary-Middle School 377

**200 Woodbine Street
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: Dominic Zagami

Dates of review: February 7 - 8, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Lillian Druck

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Alejandrina B. De Gautier is an elementary-middle school with 758 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 18% Black, 79% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% other students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty align curricula to key standards and provide rigorous learning experiences that cognitively engage students, resulting in improved learning outcomes. (1.1)
 - The school uses curriculum maps aligned to key indicators to implement standards-based lessons and support rigorous habits and higher order skills. This is correlated with the teachers' use of student work and formative data to plan and refine curricula, pacing calendars, and academic tasks across grades. Curriculum plans include interdisciplinary connections that integrate the Common Core Learning Standards and tiered activities that incorporate the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) framework and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies to cognitively engage students. As a result, curricula and academic tasks challenge students and improve their learning as measured by increased proficiency levels noted on skills tracking sheets and formative benchmark assessments.
- Teaching practices and lessons across classrooms are typically differentiated so that students have multiple opportunities to meet their learning needs. (1.2)
 - The school's beliefs about how students learn best is reflected across classrooms through the workshop model, in which teachers conduct a mini lesson followed by independent work and small group instruction. Lessons provide differentiated activities and multiple entry points through leveled texts, high interest visuals, varied graphic organizers, and numerous charts that scaffold content and facilitate learning for all students. Strategies and routines such as turn and talk, think aloud, and self-to-world connections, motivate students to participate in class and further develop their thinking. As a result, there is evidence of increased volume in writing as noted in work folders, and improved reading achievement as measured by 65% students meeting Kaplan midline literacy assessment benchmarks.
- School leaders make purposeful organizational decisions aligned with the school's instructional goals so that all students' needs are met, resulting in improved learning outcomes. (1.3)
 - Two integrated collaborative teaching (ICT) teachers looping to the fourth grade with their third grade students from last year supports the school's goals to improve achievement for high needs targeted students. This practice ensures continuity of instruction based on the teachers' prior knowledge of students' performance and insights of their abilities as learners. As a result, students produce meaningful work products, such as writing artifacts, which demonstrate positive learning trends as measured by rubrics and improved grades on unit tests.
 - The school's schedule includes designated meeting times for teacher teams to engage in professional dialogue related to improving instruction

for target students in their respective grades. One teacher team identified strategies such as the use of index cards, T-charts, and sentence strips, to assist students in organizing their ideas and improve their persuasive writing skills. These high interest activities engage students in meaningful ways while improving their learning. As a result, target subgroups demonstrate growth in their writing as noted in rubrics, which reflect that students improved in the use of word choice to persuade an audience and in the organization of ideas in their published writing.

- School leaders evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices with a clear focus on promoting professional growth and reflection, thereby impacting classroom instruction. (4.1)
 - The supervisory team uses a research–based common framework to communicate clear expectations for teacher practice. The framework focuses on three domains, which include planning and preparation, classroom environment, and instructional practices. Supervisory binders contain feedback based on formal observations, brief classroom visits, and the analysis of student data, that support the development of teachers’ skills. The feedback is used by school leaders for midyear conversations, to inform the school’s professional development plan, and to differentiate support for new teachers as needed. Teachers state that supervisors offer practical suggestions to improve their practice. One teacher indicated that following recommendations from an assistant principal, she has improved her teaching points so that they are clear and aligned with the expected outcomes of the lessons, resulting in improved instructional practice and adjustments to classroom practice, thus positively impacting student learning.
- Teachers effectively use a wide range of assessments that are aligned to the curriculum to guide instructional decisions and inform planning resulting in a clear understanding of the performance of students. (2.2)
 - The school uses baseline and midline assessment data, on-demand writing, conference notes, running records, unit tests, rubrics, and performance tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), to guide teachers’ instructional and curricular decisions, and identify the strengths and learning needs of individual and target subgroups. A close analysis of end-of-unit writing data revealed weaknesses in citing sources to support argumentative essays. The data prompted an extension of the unit to allow additional instructional time incorporating the use of specific strategies to help students meet the writing benchmarks. These adjustments to curricular maps and revisions to classroom level decisions led to improved published essays in which students advanced one or more levels across several indicators as measured by the school’s common writing rubric.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop supports for staff to improve the school culture and enhance guidance opportunities for students so that they achieve success. (4.4)
 - Faculty conferences provide information on topics related to the discipline code and safety protocols. However, the school does not provide

targeted professional development to enable the staff to create an inclusive and respectful culture, as evidenced in complaints from students and parents regarding discipline issues and occurrences in the middle grades. Consequently, not having the necessary tools and effective intervention strategies impedes the staff's ability to successfully manage behavior and results in staff not always taking full ownership and accountability for students' social-emotional growth.

- The school has two guidance counselors that work with mandated students and small target groups based on needs. However, parents and students state that support with the high school application process, information regarding applications to specialized schools, and guidance to prepare youngsters for their next level of learning are lacking. Consequently, some students are not fully motivated to plan for future goals or to work to their full potential. This hinders overall school performance as noted in the State data and in students' limited ability to clearly articulate plans for high school and post secondary opportunities.
- Increase efforts around family involvement and promote communication so that knowledge of expectations leads to acceleration of student learning. (2.4)
 - The school supports families in using ARIS Parent link to understand their children's performance in English language arts and math. However, efforts to engage families in ongoing and reciprocal discussions about students' strengths, areas of need, and next learning steps are inconsistent across grades. Consequently, parents do not have sufficient information about their children's specific learning targets to support academic work at home and to fully participate in the improvement of learning outcomes.
 - The school offers workshops, information sessions, and other opportunities for families to participate on the school leadership team, grade 8 sub-committee, and other important school activities. However, parent groups report minimum family contributions toward school decisions. This hampers parents' ability to fully participate in a meaningful manner in the school decision-making process to ultimately impact positively on student learning outcomes.
- Provide a variety of supports to students and families so that students meet the school's expectations and achieve success in their next level of learning. (3.4)
 - School leaders communicate high expectations to staff regarding instruction, classroom practice, and professionalism. The school communicates consistent expectations to families and students regarding attendance, discipline, and course requirements. However, the school does not offer sufficient opportunities to assist families in preparing their children for their next level of learning. Additionally, guidance and advisory supports to help students achieve the school's attendance, academic, and behavioral expectations, particularly in the middle school grades, are developing. This limits the school's efforts in accelerating student learning.

- Improve consistency in tracking the achievement of goals through better communication with the school community to support student learning. (3.3)
 - School leaders use targeted assessment information and Kaplan data to track the progress of school-level goals and adjust the school's Comprehensive Education Plan. However, adjustments to plans and goals are not consistently communicated across the school. This hinders the community's awareness of the school's plans for improvement and limits efforts to collectively meet school-wide goals in further accelerating student learning.
 - The school issues progress reports to families in-between marking periods to inform them of their children's performance in class. However, this practice is inconsistent across grades, varies greatly across teachers and grades, and does not detail opportunities for support. Consequently, the current practice does not fully support students and families in understanding what is needed to master academic expectations and improve learning.
- Expand systems for measuring progress towards achievement of goals so that timely adjustments are made across the school to accelerate learning for all students. (5.3)
 - Although school leaders, teacher teams and individual teachers measure the progress of students by class, their action plans do not include projected gains for interim measures of progress for subgroups of students or individual high needs students. Therefore, the school does not monitor the progress of all relevant subgroups of students toward interim goals to determine necessary adjustments to plans or strategies by class, grade, or across the school. This limits its ability to evaluate the effectiveness of plans and impedes revisions that maximize impact and further improve academic achievement for all students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

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|---|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| School name: Alejandrina B. DeGautier | 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 |