

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. 396

**110 CHESTER STREET
BROOKLYN
NY 11212**

Principal: Nira Schwartz-Nyitray

**Dates of review: May 8 – 10, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Sarah E. Goodman**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. K396 is an elementary and middle school with 260 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 57% Black, 27% Hispanic, 10% White, 5% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 61% of the students enrolled and girls account for 39%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 85.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The P.S. 396 community creates a safe and respectful environment that supports children by providing for their needs and engaging them in the life of the school. (1.4)
 - The administration coordinates the services of a large and diverse-licensed staff to ensure that students and their families receive a full range of needed supports. The in-take coordinator meets with each new family and orients them to the school environment, provides on-going connections to a range of school and agency services, and works to prepare students and families for a suitable program upon graduation. Service providers are scheduled to be integrated into the academic life of the school and meet student speech, physical therapy, and other needs, while helping to reinforce academic work. Paraprofessionals and teachers prioritize getting to know the personalities and needs of their students to build strong and trusting relationships with them in order to create a welcoming culture of which students like to be a part.
 - The school encourages students to participate in school-wide decisions through the student council. Each class votes on a student representative through an intricate system that includes campaigns and a voting booth used by all students and created by a paraprofessional that integrates pictures of the candidates on a Smart board. Once elected, student council meetings are led to the extent possible by the students themselves and involves them in decision making around important issues including the design of the soon to be created playground on school grounds, the types of food offered in the cafeteria, and the choice of movies at school celebrations. As a result of the student council, students develop their ability to advocate for themselves and their peers.
- The faculty utilizes internal and external partnerships to provide professional development for faculty and services for students that promote real world learning opportunities for students. (4.4)
 - The school community is fully involved in the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) program this year. With the on-going coordination from an on-site staff member, the faculty receives a series of professional development sessions and regular team meetings to create lessons that promote respectful interactions between adults and students. The staff also create incentives for students that are tracked and ultimately redeemed for prizes at the school store. In addition to this program, many teachers are involved in receiving training from the district for the “Get Ready to Learn” yoga program involving students in sessions in the morning that set the tone for a productive learning environment.
 - One of the school’s main priorities is to build independent life skills for its students. In addition to voting in student council elections, students are involved in running the school store, working with money, gardening, taking trips to restaurants and the library, and being part of an “age-respectful” prom. Each year, students raise money through the penny harvest and decide to which charity to donate. Through activities like these, students are involved in real world learning opportunities that build competence and develop self-esteem.
- The school provides a range of opportunities that encourage teacher collaboration and leadership development to improve professional skill development. (4.3)

- The administration firmly believes in distributive leadership and has placed a number of different staff members in facilitator roles. These facilitators are the lead teachers in team meetings, the point people for a variety of school initiatives, or responsible for turn keying any professional development they attend. The school takes full advantage of the coaching and instructional opportunities provided from the district and school specific coaches on a range of topics particular to the needs of their students as well as the start of the integration of the Common Core Learning Standards into the curriculum. As a result of the diverse learning opportunities offered to all staff members, the faculty feel supported by and connected to a professional learning community.
- The administration organizes staff time and aligns resources to initiatives that are developing learning opportunities. (1.3)
 - The school investment of staff and money into technology allows classrooms to have Smart boards and computers that access the web-based curriculum materials, assessment systems, and other available resources. Teachers frequently bring in music, videos, and other interactive media to stimulate and guide students through lessons. Each teacher has an I-pad to support the real time entering of assessment data. An on-site technology specialist has created a file maker pro system to help track student data. These initiatives are working to support student engagement and data collection to improve staff's ability to plan for appropriate learning opportunities for students.
 - Teachers meet during multiple common planning sessions a week along with a one-to-one session with their assigned assistant principal. At least one session a week is devoted to developing the PBIS program. During team meeting times, teachers may review particular students or lessons on which they would like feedback, and their group through brainstorming techniques or identifying materials try to keep the Common Core and the Depth of Rigor in mind, thus, beginning to align the development of lessons to these frameworks.
- Teachers utilize rubrics and on-going checks for understanding to work towards meeting the needs of students and adjust teaching practice. (2.2)
 - Across the school, teachers gather data utilizing a rubric that measures a student's accuracy of the result and his/her level of independence demonstrated in achieving the result. Teachers are instructed to gather this information on a regular basis and some of them use the results to guide planning, instructional decisions, and provide data to the administration that informs school wide interventions and supports.
 - Some of the teachers, paraprofessionals, and service providers are very in-tune with the needs, confusions, and successes of their individual students, including those students with limited verbal skills. The ability to check for understanding within a lesson allows the adults working with a student to make immediate adjustments to the approach and materials provided to continue to develop student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Sharpen the systems that regularly evaluate and modify curriculum and pedagogy at the school to ensure student needs are met in the near future. (5.1)

- o With support from District 75, the school administration has reacted to the prior Quality Review and the City's instructional expectations to change some of the curricular resources in place and begin to align to the Common Core Learning Standards. The assistant principals meet regularly with the principal within the academic cabinet; they attend team meetings, and meet with teachers one-on-one to review data, lessons, and prior observations. In Cohort, Consultation and Data Analysis Meetings the staff reviews student assessment data to initiate discussions regarding the curriculum and instruction but this has not yet yielded an effective monitoring process. The administration as a whole is not yet consistently and coherently involved in the needed on-going adjustments to organizational, curricular, and pedagogical practices. Thus, school leaders struggle to ensure that all students are taught by effective teachers who can meet the educational needs and capabilities of all students in self-contained and/or inclusion settings across sites.
- Develop tasks, lesson plans, and curriculum maps that consistently align to key standards and integrate higher order thinking skills to support the cognitive development of all students. (1.1)
 - o The school has recently revised its curriculum by integrating materials developed specifically for the special education population by incorporating a series of tiered units relative to student needs, integrating on-going assessments, and allowing for the inclusion of a range of resources and supports. The school has also created Common Core Learning Standards literacy activities throughout the year, is planning to engage students in Common Core math tasks, and reviews the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) framework to consider rigor in lesson planning. While the school is unified around the positive behavior curriculum and sharing these lessons, called "cool tools", within an electronic drop box, they have not created a system beyond pacing calendars to develop and share unit plans or curriculum maps aligned to key standards to capture similar literacy or math based lessons for teachers.
 - o While some teachers show evidence of extensive lesson and unit planning to appropriately engage the range of learners in their classrooms, many teachers do not utilize the curricular resources available to them to create individual lessons or units tailored to the needs and abilities of their students. Many students in the school have the ability to think, speak, and write critically and creatively, but math activities for many students were primarily made out of computational worksheets and Common Core literacy tasks were often based on fill in the blanks. Many of the lessons and support services observed did not integrate questions that went beyond the recall level limiting the opportunities for students to engage in problem solving and imagination.
- Refine the process of creating, utilizing, and improving interim benchmarks throughout the school for measuring progress towards school and student goals in order to accelerate learning. (5.3)
 - o The principal and other school leaders have created a range of goals to guide their school community's work with literacy and math, the PBIS (Positive Behavior Incentive System) program, instructional strategies, and more. However, these goals do not include interim benchmarks scheduled throughout the school year. Without clear and measurable goals that have regular check-ins before the end of the school year, the administration lacks information on how the school is progressing and is limited in its ability to make adjustments to structures currently in place to improve teaching and learning.

- Every student has an Individualized Education Plan with identified student's goals readily available in a binder and on a laminated card or formal sign for all educators and service providers to reference. Data is supposed to be collected regularly on student progress towards these goals and pre- and post-tests are administered before and after every new unit. However, teacher teams and relevant service providers are not yet consistently coming together to review these goals or data to inform their planning and pedagogy. In addition, individual teachers check and revise student's Individualized Education Plan goals inconsistently leaving some students with IEP's that are up-to-date and challenge students to grow, and other students have IEP goals that do not reflect the work they are capable of, therefore hindering their academic progress.
- Utilize effective teaching strategies across all classrooms and settings to provide opportunities for students that include participation and emphasize thinking. (1.2)
 - The school has a set of beliefs centered around meeting the needs of students by understanding their particular physical, emotional, and academic strengths and weakness to provide scaffolded lessons that build knowledge and independence. Some teachers manage their classrooms effectively by fully integrating a range of manipulatives, technology, and paraprofessionals and service providers, into tightly structured lessons that utilize routines and repetition alongside engaging lessons to meet the needs of a variety of disabilities, including the needs of English language learners. However, other teachers struggle to ensure that the materials, additional staff, and other resources are well aligned to the needs of their students. In addition, teachers responsible for students in inclusion classrooms show little evidence of planning with the general education teacher or of creating supplemental materials and learning experiences that can prepare and reinforce the mainstream lessons, limiting the ability of all students to progress in their current educational settings.
 - While some teachers provided students with hands-on or creative activities that encouraged their involvement and thinking, the strongest examples of student engagement are evidenced outside of day-to-day academic instruction, but rather within student council, the Get Ready To Learn yoga program, or end-of- unit micro museum celebrations in the hallways. While teachers are beginning to meet and plan around the Common Core Learning Standards and the Depth of Knowledge, few classrooms encouraged higher-performing students to achieve above the recall level, or engage directly with a text, defend an argument, or justify their answers in math, leading to student work products that do not consistently align with student abilities.
- Strengthen the systems for observing teachers to develop instructional strategies across the school that meet the needs of all students. (4.1)
 - The assistant principals primarily carry out formal observations and informal observations or walk throughs with the teachers for whom they are responsible. New teachers receive on-going mentoring, support, and more frequent formal observations, that clearly outline the content of the lesson, next steps, and notes from a debrief. The work of the informal walk throughs is evolving at the school. While the school has begun to introduce the areas of focus from the Danielson framework, and created intervisitation opportunities for many teachers, the informal observations are not consistently frequent and do not provide feedback that is grounded in expectations for teacher practice as outlined in the Danielson Framework. While teachers have developed professional goals, the administration does not utilize them within their observation or walkthrough process, creating

missed opportunities to develop teaching skills relative to a research based system.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. K396	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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