

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. 397 Foster-Laurie
Elementary School K397

490 FENIMORE STREET
BROOKLYN
NY 11203

Principal: NANCY COLON

Dates of review: March 05, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Maria Robustelli

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 397 Foster-Laurie is an Elementary school with 376 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 87% Black, 6% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% Asian students and 3% other students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 93.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has designed and refined curriculum and academic tasks to strategically align key standards using student work and data so that students across classrooms are engaged and demonstrate progress toward postsecondary readiness. (1.1)
 - o Each teacher team receives weekly classroom level support from consultants and coaches in math, English language arts (ELA) and writing to integrate the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) into their planning and instruction, including the creation of detailed curriculum maps aligned to standards in all subject areas. Each grade level has also designed and implemented a literacy task aligned to select standards that is embedded within a unit of study. For each unit, teachers have developed rubrics, created pre and post assessments, collected benchmark assignments and have begun to analyze student work at team meetings to identify next steps as well as a wide range of instructional strategies and approaches to enhance teacher practice. Across classrooms, writing folders provide evidence of purposeful work focused on non-fiction writing. For example, the third grade CCLS literacy task focused on students synthesizing information they researched from a variety of informational texts on various mammals so the students could support their opinions with evidence. As a result, students benefit from purposeful tasks that develop skills and knowledge for a diversity of learners to prepare students for middle school and beyond.
- The principal has strategically aligned resources to develop teacher practice and provide enhanced opportunities for student engagement that promotes academic achievement. (1.3)
 - o The principal strategically uses resources to support learning priorities, including the integration of technology across classrooms. Netbooks are provided to students during math and ELA lessons to support student learning. The school has also received a technology grant to upgrade computers in the school. Students were observed in a fourth grade classroom using netbooks during an ELA lesson to research articles to identify the characteristics of an editorial. Each classroom has desktop computers to support student learning and teachers have document readers, projectors and SMARTboards to enhance lessons and provide varied opportunities for learning. As a result, resources are well-aligned to school-wide instructional goals and are effectively distributed and leveraged to support teacher practice and student learning.
 - o The administration has provided structured time for teacher teams to meet regularly throughout the week. During this time, they are supported by consultants and coaches in math, ELA and writing to help create and revise academic tasks. Teachers were observed during team meetings analyzing student work from CCLS tasks to identify areas of strength and weakness for individual students as well as sharing resources to help advance instructional goals. As a result, most students are engaged in challenging tasks to promote academic growth.
- Teachers use assessments embedded in the curricula to generate data in relation to student achievement and to modify instructional practices based on identified student needs to improve student outcomes. (2.2)
 - o Across grade levels, teacher teams and individual teachers supplement periodic assessments with both formative and summative data, including end of unit

assessments and conference logs to track student progress, identify strengths and needs and adjust instruction. These efforts are supported by external consultants and school-based coaches who meet with teachers weekly to create and revise assessments and rubrics that are embedded within the curricula and are aligned to key standards. For example, all grade levels are collecting benchmark papers within units to provide clear, rigorous expectations as well as ongoing feedback and support to all students. As a result of these efforts, teachers and administration are provided with meaningful feedback that helps to guide improvements in instruction, teacher practice and student needs, including English language learners (ELL's) and special education students.

- School leaders and staff have created a safe, orderly and respectful environment where students feel strongly supported in their learning resulting in increased student engagement and success. (1.4)
 - o The school has developed a culture of respect and safety where students were observed engaged in their learning across classrooms. Each morning students recite the “Peace Builder’s Pledge” as a reminder to help and respect others. According to the most recent Learning Environment Survey (LES), 97% of parents reported that their “child is safe at school” and 98% felt that “there is an adult at the school whom my child trusts and can get help with a school problem.” Students shared that the principal, assistant principal, guidance counselor and teachers are available for any problems or concerns and spoke of the school’s commitment to their learning. The school regularly celebrates student success through Honor Roll Assemblies, special lunches for best attendance and end of unit publishing parties. Students from each grade actively participate in a food committee once a month to share their opinions with the food supervisor regarding lunchroom meals. As a result, students are engaged and feel supported in both their academic and personal growth and development and have an active voice in school-wide decisions.
- Teachers consistently use data to support students in their personal and academic growth by communicating identified next steps as well as setting individualized learning goals that strengthen student achievement outcomes. (3.2)
 - o Teacher teams and individual teachers consistently analyze data from school-wide assessments to set interim and yearly goals for students that are aligned to curricula and address key standards. For example, in grades Kindergarten to 2, students are assessed periodically using the Children’s Progress system. Data from the assessment is used to create student groupings, provide information regarding areas of need for individual students and identify students for intervention services. Teachers also use the data to create grade level goals as well as to develop and adjust individual student goals. Within classrooms, student goals are displayed on bulletin boards or desks or within individual student folders to help support daily conversations on student learning. As a result, staff is able to plan academic tasks and create student groupings that provide targeted support and extensions in order to drive instruction and increase student achievement for all populations.
- The school has placed a high priority on providing staff with meaningful professional development opportunities that enable teachers to explore individual student learning issues and outcomes resulting in improved teacher practice. (4.3)
 - o Professional learning is aligned to school-wide goals and individual teacher needs. Consultants and coaches provide ongoing support to all grade levels to support growth in teacher practice, including individual classroom support for

demonstrating, modeling and co-teaching lessons. The assistant principal (AP) participates in monthly meetings with the network leader as well as trainings for new APs and conferences outside the school building. Additional professional development sessions offered this year include topics on Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels, rubrics, differentiated instruction, creating goals for students, research-based framework for teaching practice and performance tasks as well as Saturday trainings on the use of technology. Additional support is also provided by the guidance counselor, English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) teacher and Response to Intervention (RTI) team. Teachers shared that the professional development sessions have helped them reflect on their practice and make improvements in planning instruction, thinking about differentiation and developing higher order thinking questions. Students were able to communicate how teachers used questions and discussions to help them in their learning; they were also able to identify areas of weakness and strengths as well as strategies modeled by the teacher to help them with their understanding. As a result, these actions have increased teacher effectiveness and willingness to improve practice and are reflected in student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the consistency of learning activities to ensure that instruction, including questions and routines, are differentiated so that all students are engaged and appropriately challenged based on their individual learning needs. (1.2)
 - o A number of classrooms provide individualized support for students through groupings and modified assignments based on student data. Teachers in several classrooms identified strategies such as one-on-one or peer support, clear choices, picture cues, verbal prompting and repetition to support specific targeted students' needs. Although some teachers demonstrated a strong understanding of how to tailor instruction to meet the needs of students, differentiated instructional approaches are not consistently applied across all classrooms and grades, in order to engage and appropriately challenge a variety of learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). The lack of consistency of differentiation in teaching strategies and questioning across grades limits opportunities for academic growth for some students.
 - o Although the curriculum is rich and engaging and teachers have high expectations for students in regards to critical thinking skills, there is a lack of opportunities in the design and implementation of questioning and teaching strategies across classrooms for enrichment and acceleration options to maximize learning experiences. For example, during a second grade lesson, students were asked to recall names and characteristics of shapes. However, in a third grade classroom, students used a variety of scenarios to recall information to develop an argument, cite evidence and revise their answers based on discussions with their assigned partner. The teacher circulated throughout the room providing varying levels of support and prompts as needed. As a result, instructional strategies and questioning across classrooms do not consistently lead to high levels of student thinking and participation as evidenced in student work samples and discussions.
- Further refine system for providing ongoing feedback to teachers that provides clear expectations and identifies next steps to support their professional growth and improve student outcomes. (4.1)

- o The administration collaborates with teachers and has adopted a research-based framework to conduct frequent cycles of observations and daily walkthroughs. Teachers have received professional development in the identified competencies, including questioning and discussion. However, there is a need to further develop this system in order to provide comprehensive and timely, actionable feedback for teachers to improve their instructional practice and reflect on their growth. Consequently, teachers are not provided ongoing opportunities to purposefully review their teaching practices with administration to identify key areas and next steps for improvement that align to their professional goals.
- Refine systems for evaluating the process of making data accessible to families and students so they can better understand specific academic and personal needs and next steps in order to support student success. (5.2)
 - o The school currently communicates high expectations regarding academic performance and student behavior. Although families receive information regarding progress and next steps through informal conversations with teachers, report cards, a mid-year progress report and periodic assessments. However, parents state the need to improve communication in regards to the amount of feedback they receive as well as how to use data to support their children in reaching or exceeding their goals. The lack of structure to inform the school's feedback to parents inhibits adjustments to improve parental involvement and understanding of their child's performance.
- Increase internal and external opportunities to celebrate success for all students and families in order to further support them in their social-emotional learning and academic growth. (4.4)
 - o The staff receives support on the social-emotional development of students from the guidance counselor, and the school has created an environment where students feel welcome and supported. However, there are limited external and internal opportunities to facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed. Consequently, this lessens opportunities for the enhancement of school-wide practices to provide students and families with ongoing strategies during and after school to address social-emotional barriers to learning in order to increase engagement and performance for all students for their success in and outside of the classroom environment.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. 397 Foster-Laurie	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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