

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**P.S. 398 Walter Weaver
Elementary school K398**

**60 EAST 94 STREET
BROOKLYN
NY 11212**

Principal: Diane Danay-Caban

Dates of review: May 3-4, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Nancy Birson

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 398 Walter Weaver is an Elementary school with 355 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 86% Black, 7% Hispanic, 2% White, 0% Asian students and 5% other students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- There is a commitment to the social, emotional development of all students that promotes mutual trust and respect among all constituencies and a very positive learning environment. (1.4)
 - o The tone and culture in the building is positive and there is respect between students, teachers and parents. Through the school-based grandparents' mentoring program, struggling students are identified and adopted for one-on-one support to promote academic and personal growth. In addition to the foster grandparents, students cite the "kindness pledge" and the "moment of silence" as helping them to resolve personal issues. As one student stated "it gives us time to think about the kind of day we want to have." Students are eager to learn and feel supported by the staff. As one student shared, "If something is wrong, they'll fix it. If something is bothering you, they'll fix it." There is a culture of trust amongst teachers on each grade level that supports a commitment to teaching and learning throughout the school, as evidenced by teachers in the school always being willing to meet with their peers to share and improve their work during scheduled teacher team meetings as well as during non-mandated times, to share and improve their work. As one teacher stated, "We're doing a lot more planning, even on our own" and, "The experienced teachers pair up with new teachers without being asked to do so."
- School gathers and analyzes a range of data to identify trends and gain an overview of the school's strengths and needs, resulting in a solid understanding of student performance. (2.1)
 - o School leaders utilize a wide range of data such as New York State tests, Acuity, baseline assessments, Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System, running records and other diagnostics to identify school-wide next steps for student support. Attendance data analysis has prompted the school to make changes to their upcoming June program dates, such as end-of-year ceremonies, which will enable students to remain in school for needed academic supports. As part of its improvement efforts, the school employs a data specialist whose primary role is to assist teachers in the development of data gathering and analysis. For example, some students in kindergarten now receive a double dose of Foundations. In mathematics, assessment results indicated an increased need for writing. Based on this analysis, the school has required a math journal for all students. Teachers point to improvements in end of unit assessments as a result of students explaining their processes. In addition, assessment data on level 1 and 2 students has resulted in as-needed adjustments in academic interventions for students. Students are matched to specific academic intervention services to meet their needs and improve their level of achievement as evidenced by a decrease of students in Level 1 in Literacy.
- Tools developed to aggregate and organize data identify trends in student performance that are accessible and useful for making school level decisions. (2.3)
 - o The school uses Acuity and Excel tools to provide them with instant data regarding student information. Administration and faculty are aware of trends in student progress on a monthly basis, resulting in a common starting point for discussions in the areas of revising learning goals and developing next steps for

students. Additionally, teacher teams use this data to develop feedback for students, resulting in student awareness of levels and areas of need, leading to improved student achievement. Teachers use binders (student folios) to monitor assessment results for their students. This facilitates the analysis of the data and informs levels of achievement towards students' goals. As a result, teachers are able to access student information readily and use this information to improve instruction and target curriculum.

- The school has provided professional supports to increase its internal capacity to enable students' social-emotional and academic growth. (4.4)
 - The Positive Behavior Interventions and Support Program, (PBIS), has resonated with the entire school community. Students, teachers and parents communicate that this initiative has helped improve classroom environments making it more conducive to learning. Students eagerly tally the Bee Bucks they have earned, and use them to purchase items in the redemption store. The school has invested professional development time to train teachers in utilizing the Pre-Referral Intervention Manual (PRIM) and paraprofessionals will be trained shortly in order to meet the needs of individual and identified groups of students in their classrooms. Monthly assemblies celebrate good behavior and citizenship, 100% attendance and milestones with the 100 Book Challenge. An additional guidance counselor was hired to work with "at risk" students and provide support for students to find or stay on the path to postsecondary readiness. Administration reports fewer behavior incidence reports and parents state they are appreciative that a respectful school and classroom environments are being created.
- School administration uses data to match the school's available resources with the most salient school-wide needs so that students' areas of need are addressed. (1.3)
 - In alignment with the school's instructional goals, the principal has strategically introduced research-based instructional resources, including academic interventions, and has contracted consultants to provide demonstration lessons and weekly collaborative planning sessions with individual teachers and teams. A great investment has been made to provide math and English language arts resources to develop math conceptual understandings and reading comprehension and phonics' skills since baseline assessments and classroom visitation snapshots indicated that the students with disabilities sub-group, in particular, was in need of immediate and intensive support in these subject areas. As a result, these efforts are beginning to show improvement in student outcomes in some grades for this sub-group.

The school continues to refine and align teacher assignments to its instructional goals. The principal makes immediate changes where teacher assignments do not support high levels of student work as evidenced in student work products, periodic assessments and summative State assessments. Some faculty and staff have been reassigned, leading to improved student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue refining curricula to ensure academic rigor across all classrooms so that all students are challenged and learning is accelerated. (1.1)
 - There is a recently developed curriculum pacing guide in English language arts and a computer adaptive reading program has been added. In mathematics, the school has adopted the use of various programs at each grade level. The

curriculum, therefore, calls upon various resources. Some however, are used as the enacted curriculum in classrooms and in others as a supplement to the curriculum. This has resulted in a lack of clarity and consistency of rigorous content expectations across grades and between grades, hindering consistent student progress school-wide.

- o High level questioning techniques are a priority for the school and Depth of Knowledge wheels are prominent in each classroom. Teachers are expected to evaluate their resources for rigorous activities but administration states that the school is still grappling with the definition of rigor. Teachers incorporate questioning techniques during their lessons, but the questions do not consistently promote the depth and rigor, thus limiting opportunities to facilitate student learning for the various sub-groups.
- Continue to deepen teacher pedagogy so that there is alignment as to beliefs on how students learn best that is shared by all teachers and reflected in teaching strategies across all grades. (1.2)
 - o While critical thinking strategies are noted, some teachers' pacing and questioning techniques often do not yet encourage higher order thinking across classrooms resulting in limited student engagement. Several classrooms lessons were teacher dominated, limiting time for students' active and authentic participation. For example, in one classroom, the teacher indicated to a student's response, "That's what I wanted to hear." In another classroom, students were continuously reminded to raise their hand to speak and student misconceptions in another classroom were not addressed as student responses were left unchallenged or explained. These practices limit students' opportunities to accelerate their own learning.
 - o The school expects teachers to use data to plan and provide differentiated instruction. A protocol for looking at student work, with feedback and next steps for individual students is completed at teacher meetings. However, across several classrooms differentiation of instruction, questioning or tasks are not consistently implemented. This is particularly true for special needs students where performance assessment tasks are also revised as they are deemed "too high." As a result, not all students are provided with challenging tasks or are over-scaffold in their learning.
- Improve the alignment of assessment with curriculum so that teachers and teacher teams identify the strengths and needs of individual students and sub-groups. (2.2)
 - o Teachers and administration rely on the use of classroom data such as running records to monitor student growth. Although these are used to discuss relevant strategies for individual students and some subgroups, there is a lack of substantial analysis of data and student work to leverage change in teacher practice for improved student outcomes. Although teachers individually and in teams spend considerable amount of time analyzing summative, periodic, and classroom level student data, they are not able to pinpoint and clearly articulate specific needs of student sub-groups by grade or class, limiting the usefulness of data in determining the effectiveness of instructional decisions. Furthermore, the use of rubrics and checklists for self-assessments during lessons, as well as other ongoing comprehension checks by teachers, are inconsistent across classrooms, therefore hindering teachers' ability to make immediate or timely adjustments to the lessons to ensure addressing student-learning needs.

- Deepen the level of feedback to teachers that clarify expectations for improved teacher practice. (4.1)
 - o School leaders have recently begun to use frequent cycles of observation to capture teacher strengths, weaknesses, and next steps, and the connection to Danielson teacher development rubric is beginning to emerge. Feedback, however, does not always provide a clear timeline for follow-up and does not include reference to student work and data analysis. The school has determined that they will follow a quarterly implementation of different components of the Danielson Framework. For example, they began the school year with classroom environment, then planning and preparation and presently, questioning. The absence of references to student learning as evidence of impact of instructional practices has hindered the deepening of instructional capacity. An online professional development program is available to teachers, however there is not yet the development of a coherent staff development plan that incorporates, and is fully aligned, to school goals. As a result, decisions around professional development are made based on offerings from the network, the Department of Education, or programs in the building without a focused strategy, minimizing the ability to improve effective teaching practice.

- Refine the structures in place to evaluate the curricular adjustments and instructional practices in the classroom. (5.1)
 - o School leaders and faculty implemented a year-long curriculum pacing calendar in English language arts. The school is at the beginning stages of implementing literacy in the content areas as well as in establishing specific time frames to evaluate and further align curricula, instructional units and practices across all content, in response to student needs. Consequently, school priorities such as higher order skills, increased student discussions, open-ended questioning based in Depth of Knowledge principles, and small group work are not yet the norm. School leaders monitor the *Team Data Action Plan: From Data Analysis to Classroom Implementation Classroom Focused Action Plan (CFAP)* during meetings and conversations with teachers. These have resulted in coherence in the topics and themes taught on a grade. However, the school does not yet have a clearly articulated process for evaluating the impact of the plans on student progress and administration speaks only to a general sense of “seeing improvement in all areas” from curriculum to instruction. As a result, the ability to revise curricular and instructional practice in a timely manner is impeded.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. 398 Walter Weaver	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		
1..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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