

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. 009 Sarah Anderson
Elementary school M009

100 WEST 84 STREET
MANHATTAN
NY 10024

Principal: DIANE BRADY

Dates of review: March 5th and 6th, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Deena Abu-Lughod

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 009 Sarah Anderson is an Elementary school with 597 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 9% Black, 19% Hispanic, 59% White, 8% Asian students and 2% other students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 96.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well-developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers skillfully use a variety of qualitative and quantitative measures of student learning to pinpoint challenges and build on strengths to help each student to mastery and beyond. (2.2)
 - All teachers use a comprehensive range of assessments as a guide for targeting instructional needs, tracking progress and evaluating impact. Conferences, distracter analysis of selected response tests, and running records pinpoint student needs and provide the basis for flexible small groups and individualized goals. Strategic assignments of “think marks,” teacher-created skill-specific bookmarks where students respond to text-based questions, provide an ongoing record of improvement in reading comprehension. These practices keep both students and their parents apprised of the child’s next learning step, so each student is aware of and works towards progress in meaningful ways.
 - Task-specific rubrics and a variety of graphic organizers for scaffolding writing are the norm in all subjects and provide for differentiated questions and new tools that push students to exceed the standards. For example, Grade 4 students included counterarguments and up to eight persuasive techniques in letters they wrote to real businesses in support of or against a product or practice. Students from kindergarten on use rubrics to both guide their work and reflect on their performance before receiving feedback from their teacher. The data that teachers collect by trait on pre- and post on demand writing, as well as on multi-draft final products informs instruction and enables teachers to reflect on their practice to make adjustments at the individual student and class level that result in high levels of student success, as seen in the literacy gains that have exceeded the city average for the past several years.
- Curricula are strategically planned around interdisciplinary themes to provide students with relevant learning experiences that build an appreciation and readiness for work at higher levels. (1.1)
 - Social studies provide an anchor around which much of the rich, relevant, multidisciplinary curricula, including the Common Core-aligned units, cohere. Students generate questions to stimulate inquiry, immerse themselves in carefully selected leveled fiction and non-fiction texts, and then take and justify stances. For a unit on the civil war, students asked: why did the South keep fighting when they had half the soldiers? What if the South had won? Questions are posted and revisited as students incorporate new knowledge based on their assigned perspectives as abolitionists or southerners. Coached well through multi-modal research, finding authentic audiences and enriching their work with vivid vocabulary, written work is of very high caliber.
 - The math curriculum has evolved to include a greater emphasis on open ended problem solving. The school credits its jump from 86% to 93% proficient last year to its emphasis on reasoning and communication, which enabled teachers to recognize where learning had been breaking down. The focus intensified this year with Exemplars, to challenge students to attain even higher levels, using an 8-step method to expand strategies and communicate with greater precision, stimulating thinking for the lowest and highest performing students.

- Teachers benefit from frequent cycles of feedback from school leaders, who validate the effectiveness of their practice and support their professional areas for growth, resulting in increased student achievement. (4.1)
 - Professional learning drives the school's theory of action. Teachers set a professional goal each year, aligned both in the past and currently to a research-based framework which provides the basis for administrators' formative next steps. The principal and assistant principal conduct observations together, and their reflections with teachers are captured in written feedback, and tracked so administrators can match teacher needs to suitable supports, including on- and off-site professional development. Scheduled intervisitations enable all teachers to benefit from peer feedback, so that good practices migrate across classrooms. Tenure decisions are deliberated upon, based on observation and student data, with several extensions granted and support provided to ensure that all teachers can improve upon existing high student outcomes. As a result, teaching in nearly all classes is well aligned to the school's instructional model and has led to continued student improvement.
- The principal ably aligns resources to maximize opportunities for students and adults to focus on achieving school goals for accelerating student learning. (1.3)
 - Intelligent use of scheduling options enable well functioning teacher teams to complement their weekly curricular planning and student work analysis with a monthly 90-minute block to adapt the Common Core bundles and new weekly Response to Intervention meetings focused on child study for students in the lowest third. Given the school's notable success with high performing students, this new venue equips classroom teachers with refined diagnostic techniques previously used by out-of-classroom reading specialists, so they can ensure English language learners and students with individualized education plans perform high demand tasks. Classroom teachers now feel complete ownership for the gains of these students, on whom they must report each week, and nearly all of whom had attained grade level benchmarks by February.
 - Staffing changes based on prior year performance have enhanced opportunities for higher need students. A master teacher now serves a higher need general education class to accelerate their learning and the most effective collaborative team was split across two grades which has extended their positive impact on students and built the capacity among less experienced teachers.
- A shared commitment to uniformly high expectations for adult and student performance and behavior provide an environment where learning excels. (3.4)
 - The school is replete with evidence of the students' intellectually and artistically stimulating work produced in an environment where all constituents endeavor to meet the leader's high expectations. The rationale behind the teaching model is well defined, clearly communicated, and supported at each level, so teachers throughout the school constantly improve their practice. Parents value and actively support through fundraising, the professionalism of the staff. As a result, teachers are able to "instill a love for learning far beyond what they get from home" creating a place where both parents and students state, "it's cool to be smart."
 - Social-emotional well-being is also carefully cultivated. Assemblies reinforce appreciation of differences and the golden rule, and one where students discussed the song "Don't laugh at me" left students deeply reflective. Students and parents sign a contract each year so they can actively reinforce the school's

- behavior management guide: the wheel of choice. Students easily cite the options to resolve conflicts, and help newly arrived students adopt them, which newcomers say has helped them succeed academically and socially. New teachers learn how to enact the school's policy of "discipline with dignity" by shadowing the guidance counselor so they can learn to address students' and parents' needs in ways that align to the strong, nurturing culture. As a result, disturbances are rare, attendance is high, and students leave well prepared for their transition to middle school.
- A distributed leadership structure effectively empowers teacher teams to conduct inquiry, and develop curriculum and teacher practice in a coherent way across the school. (4.2)
 - Distributed leadership structures are embedded, and teachers generate and manage initiatives that improve practice across the school to good effect. Over the last three years, the repertoire of techniques for collective learning has expanded, starting with lesson study and learning walks three years ago, and continuing with instructional rounds last year. Teachers effectively lead their own grade level teams, which focus on refining units and tasks. In addition, teachers initiated and lead a vertical team to align curricula across grades and calibrate expectations using the Hess Cognitive Rigor matrix in planning and evaluation to ensure that questioning taps into higher levels. This led to the creation of special units on questioning, at the word, content and structural level as a deliberate strategy to embed metacognitive skills in student thinking.
 - Well established systems for evaluating curriculum and instruction lead to effective organizational decisions to support emerging needs and result in consistent increases in levels of student achievement. (5.1)
 - The frequently monitored six-prong school improvement plan links the actions of all constituents to data-based needs. Structures like the coherency team that work together with highly attuned administrators facilitate the refinement of curriculum and instruction. Teachers preserve their own work and student work across years, so they can evaluate their impact. A comparison of past 4th grade explorer persuasive letters with those produced this year, where the task and rubric were aligned to the Common Core, revealed what teachers termed "night and day" differences in the use of both text-based evidence and persuasive strategies. The scrutiny of work samples across grades and the sharing of exemplars in meetings and through web-based systems clarify grade level expectations and facilitates planning to build upon prior year learning. The administration's keen eye on emerging needs allows them to reassign organizational resources effectively. These well-functioning systems have enabled the school to maintain high gains and scores over several years.

What the school needs to improve

- Leverage existing pedagogical strengths to maximize the benefits of collaborative learning and further increase student independence. (1.2)
 - Across the school, the belief that students learn best through immersion in multi-sensory learning activities is evident, and teachers are skilled in detecting and addressing individual needs. Students in all classes applied themselves to meaningful tasks with enthusiasm, and were especially productive when cooperative learning was structured, as in carousels or in literature circles, where students had defined roles. The change in how teachers manage discussions was described by a third grader who stated, "Before, we just talked to the

teacher. Now we have groups with jobs.” However, in one class, students lacked routines to optimize the productivity of their groups, leaving some students unsure of what was expected or how to sustain discussion between peers, and therefore dependent on the teacher for guidance.

- Strategically align data systems to enhance efforts to build coherency and ensure greater uniformity of communication with parents. (5.2)
 - o Rubrics aligned to the Common Core currently co-exist with previously used rubrics that privilege craft over content, resulting in undervaluing of ideas and development. This limits the attention given to the highest leverage skills, such as student use of text-based information, and impairs efforts of the report card team to define grade level exit competencies and therefore limits the fullest information available to parents. While excellent systems are in place for collecting and sharing most data on ARIS and in Googledocs, the system for tracking data for the targeted subgroups and connecting it to the interventions of multiple providers is less refined. This hampers the new RTI team's ability to attain the levels of coordination they desire to maximize their efficacy in meeting the needs of the students they share.
- Refine action planning to ensure reinforcement of practices that link most closely to improved student outcomes. (5.3)
 - o The whole school action plan, with its measurable process goals is the true driver of change. Its rich substance is not reflected in the Comprehensive Education Plan, where achievement goals appear unambitious. This limits the degree to which all constituents can commit to the full scope of the school's work and direction. While teachers set interim goals for students, these are not explicitly connected to school-wide goals in areas other than reading levels. As a result, it is difficult for the school to fully ascertain the impact of different initiatives and practices on student learning to ensure timely revisions.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. 009 Sarah Anderson	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