

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Dr. Sun Yat Sen School

Middle School M131

**100 Hester Street
Manhattan
NY 10002**

Principal: Phyllis Tam

Dates of review: December 5-6, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Mariano Guzman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

M.S. 131 is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 701 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 6% Black, 12% Hispanic, 1% White, 81% Asian students and 0% other students. The student body includes 43% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 97%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School staff creates a culture that values the voice of student and supports their social and emotional needs in order to increase academic success. (1.4)
 - Students have advisory one period a week on Friday. The school has developed a twenty-four week calendar and each week's advisory lesson planning is guided by a list of topics developed by school leaders, teachers and counselors. The topic list focuses on several issues, such as health, anti-bullying and stress reduction. In addition, the school's peer mediation program is led by student government members, who have successfully resolved twelve cases thus far this year. Students whose social emotional needs hamper their learning are identified, by teachers, as "at-risk" of failing classes. These students are seen by counselors who follow their social-emotional growth on a weekly basis. Furthermore, students have email addresses for school leaders and teachers, thus providing them continual access to adults who can and do respond to their social and emotional needs. As a result, students and parents agree that this structure and practice has created a "sense of community" with open lines of communication for students and parents, particularly those who have recently immigrated to the United States.
- School leaders apply reviews of summative and formative data in order to identify school-wide needs and areas of student progress. (2.1)
 - The school's leadership cabinet, including content area specialists and coaches, gather and analyze a range of data, including NY State exam results, in-and-out of classroom incidents and attendance data by student, This is used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the academic and the social-emotional performance of students. In addition, administration analyzes Common Formative Assessment across the core content areas several times a year to augment and fine tune this baseline data review. For example, analysis of the school's exam data indicated that the majority of students not meeting proficiency in English language arts (ELA) were English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). A deeper analysis of the interim assessment data revealed that SWDs and ELLs were struggling with the writing component. These data reviews provide administration with a clear understanding of the school's areas of strength and need, thus resulting in focused school goals that are leading to accelerated outcomes for students.
- Ongoing communication with families and students regarding academic progress ensures a clear understanding of movement toward meeting school goals (2.4)
 - School leaders and staff have made communication a priority using multiple approaches to ensure students and families are kept apprised of students' academic progress and social emotional well-being. Monthly parent newsletters are sent home informing families of school activities and events, such as Curriculum Nights, grade level meetings and parent-teacher conferences. Over 75% parents attend each activity and event. In addition, teachers use an online grading system, TeacherEase, to provide families updated and timely information on current student performance status. Students frequently access the online grading system that provides them information on their strengths and weakness. Students report that the transparency of the school's grading and ease of accessibility of information empowers them to be active consumers of the

learning process. Families report that these strategies keep them informed of their children's current academic and social-emotional progress, thereby allowing them to support learning at home.

- The school has developed a set of clear goals that drive planning efforts to improve instruction and promote student growth. (3.1)
 - The school faculty and staff develop goals and action plans based on data from a variety of sources, including the school's Progress Report, New York State exam results and summative and formative assessments. These goals and action plans, which aim to improve student outcomes, reflect the school's long-term focus on writing across the content areas and are evidenced in the school's comprehensive educational plan (CEP). This process ensures that the school has a clear path for improvement that is shared by all members of the community and results in concerted actions to promote student growth.
- School leaders provide multiple opportunities for students to engage with external partners and school support personnel to ensure academic and social emotional growth (4.4)
 - Students participate in career, college and high school fairs at several times throughout the year. Speakers from various community based organizations (CBO), including Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Jewish Family Board, Grand Street Settlement, New York University (NYU), Hunter, among others, speak with students about a variety of programs that offer academic and enrichment support. English as a second language (ESL) for children and adults, homework help for students and mental health care are a few of the services students and families take advantage of at various times during the school year. Monthly advisories serve as a venue for teachers and guidance staff to provide students with targeted support regarding their academic and social emotional needs. These opportunities and structures ensure that students are nurtured and guided toward making academic and personal decisions that result in positive outcomes and overall growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and deepen rigor in curricula across all content areas in order to accelerate learning for all populations. (1.1)
 - School leaders and faculty have begun the work of aligning curriculum across the grades with an evolving emphasis on Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and a view toward college readiness. However, this work is not consistent across content areas and student groups. In particular, instructional tasks vary greatly in both the level of rigor and access for key sub-groups of students such as English Language Learners (ELLs) and low-performing and at-risk students. As such, the school's curricula does not yet effectively engage all students, across the continuum of learning, in academic tasks that challenge them, thereby limiting the performance growth of key groups of students.
- Ensure that teaching practices are based on the varied learning needs of all groups of students in order to accelerate student learning and improve academic outcomes for all learners. (1.2)

- School leadership and grade level teams share a common instructional focus to integrate writing across the curriculum. In addition, teachers and administrators have been working on differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students. Teams of teachers meet with ELL and SWD specialists to learn behavior management and teaching strategies to more effectively include special populations into classroom instruction. However, this information is not consistently implemented in classroom instruction or across classrooms within the school. In addition, academic experiences did not frequently prompt student-to-student dialogue, but instead were mainly student-to-teacher dominated. In most classes, the majority of questions asked did not require students to provide more than basic recall information. English Language Learners and SWDs, in particular, are frequently asked very literal questions and seldom required to use information from the text or learning experience to synthesize new thinking. The limited opportunity to engage with a variety of strategically thoughtful higher level questions, through student-to-student discussion, limits student thinking; thus inhibiting accelerated growth for all students.
- Build on the use of teacher time and personnel resources to ensure actualization of instructional goals and increased student achievement. (1.3)
 - The principal hired literacy and math coaches to support content area instruction. Teachers are scheduled for structured professional collaborations that are guided by the literacy and math coaches. While part of the work the coaches have done with teachers has been on the integration of the expectations embedded in CCLS into teaching practices, that work is not yet evident across all classrooms. In addition, teacher teams are now beginning to meet more consistently and work on teaching strategies. As a result of these developing practices, student work products, throughout the school, evenly reflect high levels of thinking.
- Align the use of summative and formative assessment data to curriculum to ensure that classroom practice and strategies for all students are informed by ongoing data analysis and result in improved instruction for all students. (2.2)
 - Teachers use ELA, math and NYSESLAT summative assessment results with a focus on students who are a few points below or above proficiency level 3. The school identifies these students as their "slippable and pushable" students. To varying degrees, teachers use formative assessment data including exit slips, reading logs and pre and post test results to assess student learning. However, in the majority of classrooms visited there was very little evidence that these data are analyzed to determine the specific strengths and weaknesses of all groups of students. In addition, there is no evidence that the ongoing data gathered at the end of the lesson and unit is used to assess students' understanding and make modifications in instructional decisions in order to address deficit skill areas. Thus teachers are limited in their ability to meet the learning needs of all learners.
- Enhance the use of the chosen research-based framework for classroom observations so that feedback to teachers strengthens their teaching practice and guides professional learning in order to increase outcomes for all students. (4.1)
 - School leaders use the Danielson framework to observe teacher practice and provide feedback based on informal classroom visits. The principal is reviewing the low inference evidence tool used to provide feedback to teacher in order to improve communications regarding expectations. . However, the feedback is not

always timely and does not consistently include the level of specificity needed, particularly regarding literacy lessons that are needed to improve teaching practice, closing the achievement gap for their students. As a result, teachers do not have a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses; and professional development is not consistent, particularly for teachers new to the practice. Thus teachers' ability to provide effective strategies that accelerate the learning of all students is limited.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Dr. Sun Yat Sen School	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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