

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Sojourner Truth School**

**School M149**

**41 West 117 Street  
New York  
NY 10026**

**Principal: Barbara Darrigo**

**Dates of review: March 7- 8, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Esther Friedman**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S./ M.S. 149 Sojourner Truth is a K-8 school with 432 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 69% Black, 21% Hispanic, 1% White, 2% Asian students and 9% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 21% 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 90.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school's safe and respectful learning environment is a result of structures and supports that address students' pro-social behaviors. (1.4)
  - The principal has put in place a range of structures and supports, including establishing protocols for access to the building and enforcing a ban on student cell phone use. In addition, the school community has adopted the Life is Good and Love Our Children programs, used strategic home visits and targeted guidance counselor support for classroom teachers. This has engaged the entire school staff in explicitly messaging increased expectations and has resulted in an improved climate and a fifty per cent decline in Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) reports from the previous year. (1.4.a)
  - Students are engaged in a range of activities that promote pro-social skills and establish academic expectations, including goal setting meetings which enable eighth graders to have voice on issues such as the types of academic topics they wish to cover and planning for the senior prom, an increase in enrichment clubs, a student ambassadors program that includes the development of activities to resolve conflict, and a grade 3 student book club. As a result, students have a positive impact on the school through active participation in school-wide decision making, thus promoting student engagement, pro-social skills, and rigor. (1.4.c)
- School leaders have developed an array of internal and external partnerships that support meeting students' personal needs in order to promote higher outcomes for students. (4.4.)
  - The school engages in varied professional development activities and programs focused upon the development of pro-social skills in students, including an anti-bullying program, training in awareness of gang-related behaviors, and ongoing engagement in Positive Behavior Instructional Supports (PBIS). Participation in the Respect for All program, as well as a classroom management program, have embedded a consistent set of behavioral expectations in all teachers regarding methods for managing classrooms and students. This has resulted in marked improvement in student behaviors during instructional time, and greater evidence of students engaged in peer support in academic tasks.
  - The principal has cultivated partnerships with local colleges such as Monroe College, as well as with the Harlem Children's Zone, which has provided cyclical opportunities for students to go on college tours and engage in other college readiness activities. This has resulted in an increased awareness of the world of college for students and parents, and an increase in expectations relative to college attendance for students.

- School leaders have aligned the use of space and personnel to support the school's instructional goals in order to promote student growth growth. (1.3)
  - Leadership has made strategic budget decisions that have allowed for the purchase of materials to support differentiated needs of students, including leveled texts for use in differentiated groups, nonfiction text for use in the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) units, customized libraries for specific groups of students, Smart Boards and Smart Tables, calculators and laptops. This has resulted in increased classroom resources to be used during the delivery of instruction, in order to support students in meeting the demands of the CCLS. As a result, some students' work products reflect increased levels of thinking.
- Teachers are beginning to create and refine lessons that emphasize higher-level questioning, differentiated instruction in response to student needs, and opportunities for increased student responsibility for learning. (1.2)
  - Teachers meet weekly in grade teams to plan units that are aligned with school goals and State standards, including the CCLS units, and embed concepts from professional development in Depth of Knowledge (DOK), with attention to teacher questioning. Some teams are beginning to ask questions that fall in various levels of DOK to different groups of students. This is done through the use of tasks in which students have opportunities to plan and carry out multi-step performance tasks as part of their learning, particularly evident in the new work stressing expository reading and writing.
- School leaders and teachers are embedding the common core standards into the curriculum so that students across the grades are exposed to a more rigorous curriculum. (1.1)
  - The administration has provided varied opportunities for teachers to learn how to “unwrap” the CCLS. Teachers have developed some units of study that reflect expectations of the CCLS. In addition, some questions embedded within the curriculum maps reflect the schools attempt to engage a variety of learners. This work is driving the school's efforts to engage student in a variety of learning experiences, thus promoting higher student outcomes.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Establish a transparent system to evaluate the impact of teacher team work and professional development on teacher capacity. (5.4)
  - Teachers participate in varied professional learning experiences, such as teacher team meetings and work with outside consultants. This provides teachers with varied support opportunities. However, administration has not established a structure to evaluate the impact of professional learning experiences on teacher practice. This limits the strategic alignment of professional development to targeted pedagogical needs, thus impeding the growth of teacher practice and, ultimately, student outcomes.

- Further develop a school-wide system for monitoring student progress between annual goals so that mid-course adjustments in practice can be made in order to ensure appropriate progress towards stated goals. (5.3)
  - Teachers confer to evaluate student work products, assess progress and attempt to use this information, along with group feedback to refine lessons. However, there is no system of school-wide recording of benchmark attainment as a means to measure progress towards stated student and school goals. Nor does leadership have a clearly identified system in place to fully participate in the process of analyzing data to determine progress made. This limits administration's understanding of where individual and groups of students are relative to meeting identified goals and ability to make mid-course adjustments in practice, as needed. As a result, growth toward school-wide and student goals are limited.
- Ensure that the assessments used to supplement summative data provide teachers meaningful and actionable data related to students' strengths and areas of need in order to meet the needs of all students. (2.2)
  - Teachers use interim assessments aligned to the curriculum to gauge achievement. These assessment tools give the school a general understanding of students' comprehension, relative the units of study taught. However, the interim assessments used do not provide teachers with a clear understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses in the underlying areas of reading, specifically phonics, structural analysis, and fluency. In addition, while some teachers embed questions within the lesson to check students' understanding of the learning as part of the launch of the unit, this practice is inconsistent between teachers and from one unit to the next. This limits teachers' ability to provide targeted instruction to individual and groups of students, thus limiting academic growth.
- Monitor the progress of goals at the school and team levels so that adjustments to learning plans are result in increased achievement for individual and groups of students. (3.3)

Administrators set goals and use interim data, such as checklists and Acuity Instructionally Targeted Assessments (ITAs), to determine if students are on track to attain goals. However, school leaders do not yet use these interim data to effectively adjust school-wide goals. In addition, teachers do not use the results of these interim data to progress of key subgroups of students or adjust instructional planning and practice. This prevents the school from having a clearly understanding the progress levels of individual and groups of student, and using that information to make adjustments as needed. As a result, student achievement is limited.

- Ensure that cycles of informal observation are frequent and used to inform formal visits including a uniform system for written and verbal feedback in order to provide targeted professional development. (4.1)
  - Leadership engages in informal class visits and provides feedback on teacher practice. However, the frequency of classroom visits is not based on teacher need or proficiency of practice. In addition, administration

does not yet use trends and patterns from classroom observations to inform professional development options. These practices prevent administration from appropriately scaffolding teacher development support and providing targeted learning experiences based on pedagogical. Thus, growth in teachers' ability to implement instructional strategies that result in increases in academic achievement is limited.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name:	UD	D	P	WD
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?		<b>X</b>		
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		<b>X</b>		
<b>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.</b>				

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?		<b>X</b>					
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?	<b>X</b>						
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>