

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**The Early Childhood
Discovery and Design Magnet School
M185**

**20 West 112 Street
New York
NY 10026**

Principal: Jane Murphy

Dates of review: December 13-14, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Esther Friedman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 185 The Early Childhood Discovery and Design Magnet School is an early childhood school with 251 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 2. The school population is comprised of 60% Black, 36% Hispanic, 2% White, 1% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 11.54% English language learners and 17.8% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.0%. The school receives Title I funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has created curriculum with a focus on key standards incorporating rigorous CCLS aligned performance tasks resulting in student work that reflects higher order thinking skills. (1.1)
 - The school devotes staff planning time for development and analysis of curriculum and academic tasks, including curriculum mapping, and unit development utilizing an Understanding by Design (UDL) model. The CCLS focus is evident, particularly in the use of nonfiction text across content areas, and the use of methods that raise rigor and provide multisensory experiences. This results in engagement of all students to a higher level.
 - Teacher teams work together to create and refine units. They use varied forms of data to inform this work, resulting in data-informed discussion regarding unit and lesson development. Unit plans reflect responsiveness to targeted student needs, such as those within the underlying skill areas of reading. This results in sufficient entry points for students to successfully undertake tasks.
- Organizational decisions strategically support the school's instructional focus resulting in higher levels of student work and improvement in instructional practices. (1.3)
 - The principal's organizational decisions are designed to support the school's goals, including alignment of the budget to the CEP, utilization of staff for small group instruction, strategic reassignment of staff, scheduling options that allow for longer literacy periods, and a push-in model for Special Education Teacher Support Service (SETSS) and academic intervention services (AIS). The impact of organizational decisions is linked to student achievement as evidenced by the system for measuring student outcomes.
 - Teacher teams meet on a regular weekly basis with additional time scheduled over and above this minimum, including regular grade meetings, a weekly inquiry meeting, and meetings compensated through per-session for additional unit and lesson development. The CCLS aligned tasks created and revised during this time engage students in rigorous instruction as evidenced in students work products.
- Teachers use data to inform instruction so that teams and individual teachers effectively utilize assessments to ensure targeted instruction. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams analyze a variety of data, including running records, conference notes, level-attainment checklists, and rubrics, and have developed ways to record and summarize this information in accessible formats. Teachers do this in team settings, including vertical (cross grade) and horizontal (grade-specific) meetings, inquiry groups and in individual planning. Specialized data is analyzed for specific populations, including the use of NYSESLAT data for English language learners and Brigrance

and other data for special education students. There is beginning discussion on the 'how to' of reading, referencing the underlying pillars of reading. This has provided teachers with access to assessments which are aligned to instruction and use of this data to refine and differentiate ongoing instruction.

- School leaders 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. (4.1)
 - The principal engages in frequent classroom visits focused on observed practice and review of student work in the classroom providing verbal feedback and detailed written observation reports. This information is used in teacher supervision. References are made in observation reports to the implementation of strategies learned at professional development such as Math in the City and on-site instructional support from the Network Achievement Coach. Next steps are specific and tied to specific student data, making effective use of the teacher planning process to target student needs. The Danielson framework is utilized and referenced in observation reports. Supports for teachers are noted in observation reports including professional articles, instructional guides and professional development opportunities resulting in targeted assistance to individual teachers.

- Strategic external and internal collaborations provide students with support services with a wide range of opportunities to grow academically and socially, in and out of school. (4.4)
 - The school engages in an active partnership with PS 208, to which it is a feeder school. This partnership includes intervisitations between the school, cross collaboration at teacher team meetings with a focus on sharing information vertically between the school, as well as sharing of expectations for third-grade performance, resulting in continuous academic and social supports for all students.
 - External collaborations include a King Towers after-school program providing a safe space for students; a local food bank collaboration addressing food anxiety; collaboration with Bank Street College on early childhood practices; use of Tufts University to support the Devtech robotics program, District Three Magnet Grant focusing on engineering, and a WNET Mommy and Me program in development which will bridge home and school learning. These provide students and families with academic and social learning experiences that prepare them for opportunities outside of the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Create a coherent system for differentiation of strategies that build critical thinking and high levels of student discussion resulting in lessons in which all students can engage. (1.2)
 - Teachers engage in discussion and professional development related to differentiation of instruction and use instructional strategies that aim to engage all students. However, differentiation is not consistently targeted to evidenced student needs. For example, in some classrooms students are groups with

tasks aligned to their instructional needs. In other classrooms, teachers conduct whole class lessons. As a result of this inconsistency, not all students are actively challenged to meet their next learning levels.

- Teacher teams analyze data such as a grade three decrease in the ability to master informational text. This results in some embedding of varied methodologies into lessons across some classrooms – including student questioning, opportunities for peer-to-peer talk, and teacher modeling of questioning. However, scaffolding is inconsistent, resulting in few entry points for students who struggle with higher level conversation and text as evidenced in the lack of student engagement and questioning across some classrooms.
- Promote greater consistency in differentiated goals based upon students' specific evidenced needs so that planning results in greater student engagement in challenging academic tasks that extends student thinking. (3.2)
 - The school utilizes data to create goals and objectives for class groupings. Teacher teams work on refining lessons based on student response, including results of interim assessments and progress monitoring. However, while data use is clearly tied to lesson and unit refinement, it is not communicated in a sufficiently transparent way to administration and students and does not result in goals that are fully differentiated for individuals and groups of students.
 - Student progress is assessed and recorded in a variety of formats and used in teacher team work. These translate into the creation of instructional groupings. However, the ways that differentiation occurs within these groups is not clearly tied to CCLS or the specific supports that would extend student thinking. While some teachers engage in methodology to extend student thinking – self-questioning behaviors specifically – there is limited direct instruction in this strategy and inconsistent release of responsibility to students in this regard, resulting in inconsistent independent use of differentiated strategies by students.
- Ensure that structures are in place school wide for evaluating curricula and corresponding instructional decisions to build teacher capacity and reinforce CCLS alignment across grades. (5.1)
 - Curriculum calendars have incorporated CCLS and revisions are in progress to reflect the magnet curriculum with Teachers College. The new math curriculum allows for greater mastery of skills and knowledge with regular assessments through Early Childhood Assessment of Mathematics (ECAM). While these practices show promise, there are insufficient structures in place to routinely evaluate school-wide instructional practices and student work products across grades. Teachers have few formal opportunities to compare and contrast practices across classrooms which limits meaningful reflection of current practices.
 - The school monitors instruction and resource use with instructional rounds providing feedback that monitors implementation of recommendations. However there is no formal structure in place to aggregate data based on student mastery of the CCLS to regularly evaluate, identify and adjust what teachers need to learn to support improved student achievement.

- Strengthen the process for evaluating the effectiveness of assessment practices to ensure strategic selection and use of data collection and aggregation. (5.2)
 - The school gathers substantial amounts of data derived from a range of assessment tools. There is also effort made in triangulating data where possible to ensure validity. However, the alignment of these tools is not always reliable in terms of the levels derived even when looking only at one level of reading ability, specifically comprehension. Additionally, these tools do not comprehensively capture all aspects of the underlying pillars of reading so that there is a great deal of data looking only at one level of the reading process. The data derived from curriculum-embedded math assessments are not consistently reliable in terms of differentiating student groupings for targeted work. While student work is actively analyzed in teacher team meetings and in other contexts, its use in creating actionable follow-up is inconsistent. The use of a school-wide color-coded rubric system for students has been put in place, although its use is also inconsistent and many students have difficulty explaining how it is used. This hinders schools capacity for strategic selection and effective use of data collection and aggregation.

- Establish a school wide system to measure progress towards long-term goals (multi-year) via interim goals that are transparent and inclusive of faculty in order to make adjustments according to CCLS student performance and teacher development. (5.3)
 - While there are actions plans for literacy and math goals and a system in place for team leaders from each grade to debrief weekly on unit work, there is not a clear school-wide articulation of where the school is in relation to its goals overall. The school is attentive to data and reorganizes AIS support, developing intervention plans for those students showing need, but an evaluation of how this system is impacting school goals is not evident. Likewise, the child study team has focused on student goals for a specific group of children which is correlated to incident reports, but interim benchmarks to evaluate progress toward the stated goals was not articulated. In the absence of a system which engages the school community to evaluate the impact of these processes over the long term, the impact of adjusted goals on accelerated student outcomes is minimized.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: The John M. Langston 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 student 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