

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Alain L. Locke School

M208

**21 West 111th Street
Manhattan
NY 10026**

Principal: Susan Green

Dates of review: March 29-30, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Esther Friedman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Alain L. Locke Schools/M208 is an Elementary school with 210 students from grade 3 through grade 5. The school population is comprised of 68% Black, 30% Hispanic, 0% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school utilizes the State standards as the framework to which the curricular scope and sequence is aligned and to which student assessment is tied for the purpose of driving and refining instruction to support all students. (1.1)
 - The school has incorporated the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) bundles into their curriculum mapping work. These units are incorporated into the teacher team work and are evident in both lessons and in student work products within and outside of the classroom. The school's magnet grant provides strong resources in this regard, including support of curriculum mapping with a strong focus on the sciences and environmental stewardship. This content and evidence of students' high-level interaction with it is evident in peer-to-peer and teacher-student interactions within lessons, in the classroom environment and in related student work products.
 - Student work is analyzed frequently and regularly and provides feedback to teacher teams as they continuously refine lessons in response to patterns and trends in student work products. Because student work is analyzed on an individual basis, needs of English language learners, special needs and at-risk students are assessed in frequent cycles to determine specific 'toolkit' scaffolds needed to ensure that all students have access to the content and concepts. The use of these scaffolds is embedded into the lesson planning and is evident in classroom use. This cycle of ongoing analysis that is sensitive to individual and cohort needs ensures that instructional decisions are responsive to all students' needs and that students are engaged with tasks that move their level of understanding continuously.
- Teacher practice is aligned to the belief that all children can be moved to increasing levels of rigor and designed to ensure increasingly higher levels of thinking across all classrooms. (1.2)
 - The school embodies the belief that children learn best when their specific needs are being met. For example, teachers' use a range of graphic organizers that are integrated into various lessons as a support for students struggling with text structure, including English language learners (ESL). This provides multiple entry points into the content so that all students are supported at their learning level.
 - All teachers use varied protocols to ensure that students are engaged at a high level of thinking. These include authentic instructional tasks, many of them aligned to the themes highlighted in the magnet grant curriculum such as incorporating the study of hydroponics and the problem solving required for creating hydroponic environments that are both viable and sustainable. Students are actively engaged in planning for and then supporting these environments in a structure that stresses knowledge building, questioning and problem solving related to creating and sustaining life within these environments and then relating them to related real-life scenarios outside of the hydroponics lab. This results in robust

peer-to-peer discussions that emphasize the frequent use of tier two vocabulary and varied opportunities to show understanding of new material as evidenced by robust classroom conversations that utilize rigorous vocabulary and student work products that show stamina for writing.

- The principal has made strategic organizational decisions that result in support of student learning visible through a broad range of student work products. (1.3)
 - The principal and staff made a decision to adopt a new math core program that provides alignment with the early-grades feeder school with which it is associated and also provides instructional approaches that stress greater mastery of skills and concepts than the previous program. Into this scope and sequence has been embedded the work of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) bundles. This has resulted in an overall increase in the level of student work products, particularly with regard to use of academic language and stamina for writing.
 - Teachers' schedules are structured so that they can engage in grade-level meetings at a minimum of once per week. Teams engage in a low-inference protocol for evaluating student work called ORID (observation, reflection, interpretation, and design of next steps). This process involves a cycle of lesson refinement. For example, student work analyzed in this way has yielded decisions to re-teach concepts, to rearrange the sequence of lessons, and to incorporate supportive strategies such as the Freire method for supporting the use of challenging vocabulary. This results in refinement of lessons in response to student needs.
- Teacher teams engage in on-going analysis activities focused on ensuring curriculum alignment through the use of student data, including sub-groups, resulting in ongoing refinement and adjustment of instructional practice. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams have created both rubrics and checklists which are used to evaluate student work and by students for self evaluation. These assessment tools are aligned to the school's curriculum maps and lessons and are used to ensure that all students' needs are met so that they can fully engage in the curriculum, knowledge building and task production. Assessment is multifaceted and seeks to analyze individual student progress, including students with special needs, students who are at risk, and English language learners This frequent ongoing progress monitoring provides teachers and administrators information that is then used for continuous cycles of lesson refinement in which all students' needs are considered to support their next steps.
- Systems of continuous feedback to teachers by both administrators and teacher peers are in place, providing staff with on-going opportunities to refine their instructional practice in order to improve student achievement. (4.1)
 - The principal and assistant principal utilize a consistent and structured research-based protocol for feedback to teachers that includes low-inference observation and suggestions for follow up provided. They utilize a consistent structure that includes specific low-inference observation; each followed by a recommendation for follow up and adheres to this consistently in their walkthroughs. This structure is

supplemented by the use of customized checklists to ensure that specific areas are viewed consistently. This information, along with the review of ongoing progress monitoring data specific to each class is also used to structure verbal feedback and conversations about these observations. Formal and information observations are done daily by the principal and assistant principal and all teachers receive regular cycles of observation and feedback that occur weekly. This provides a structure for ongoing feedback conversations with teachers and is also a model for teacher-to-teacher feedback that ensures ongoing analysis of instructional impact.

- There is a robust school-wide system of pro-social skills development in place, in which all students are known by an adult which positively impacts on all relationships and behaviors needed for a safe environment. (1.4)
 - Teachers report concerns about absent or tardy students to the administration or guidance counselor. To increase attendance, a progressive approach that includes home visits is utilized when less intensive approaches have not produced a response. There is also a system of incentives that are both celebratory and provide concrete rewards. These include awards events, prominently posted high attendance/honor role charts, class-wide prizes for good attendance such as special award forms and student prizes. Consequently, attendance has increased since the start of the school year. This work is enhanced by other activities, such as a structured cognitive behavior modification approach to anti-social behaviors, a weekly town-hall-style meeting, as well as by the strategic placement of teachers for effective classroom management. As a result, the school demonstrates a friendly and supportive culture where all students are known, their social needs are met and a feeling of safety is visible in all constituents.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a system to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams in order to target adjustments to instructional practices to improve student progress. (5.4)
 - Teacher teams meet on a regular and frequent basis, however the administration does not have a system in place to monitor the effectiveness of the teams' work on student outcomes. For example, there is no concrete trail between the work of the teams and tracking of students' progress over time in a recursive structure to ensure that areas of student need are addressed and that interventions have succeeded and been maintained over time. Consequently, the absence of a team monitoring system hampers the school's ability to make informed decisions to support their work to improve student progress.
 - The administrative team retains binders of student data. However, while student data is used to make certain decisions, such as teacher placement and tenure decisions, it is not consistently used in the mentoring process. Thus administrative mentoring and supports are not clearly linked to student data.

- Develop comprehensive monitoring and tracking structures to note ongoing progress in discrete areas of reading and math including the monitoring of the CCLS in order to more clearly delineate student learning challenges. (5.2)
 - The administration maintains oversight of checklists and rubrics and other student assessment tools. However, while this structure provides for the evaluation of classroom assessments, there is no comprehensive component for the tracking of progress for individual students especially for the purpose of monitoring student mastery of curriculum at higher levels of thinking. Thus, this lessens the school's ability to evaluate and adjust assessments to further align and integrate the CCLS across the school and for individual students' growth.
 - The school utilizes a variety of formal and informal assessment tools for ongoing progress monitoring. However, in the area of reading, these tools all focus on the top pillar of reading comprehension, without a system to look at and track other underlying pillars of reading, such as fluency and decoding. As a result, students continue to experience specific challenges in reading related to these underlying pillars which impacts adversely on achieving higher proficiency levels.
- Refine individual and group goals to reflect the distinct needs of all groups of students for the purpose of providing supports and interventions. (3.2)
 - There is an on-going cycle of planning by teacher teams, with goal-setting done for the grade. These goals are then somewhat further differentiated for small group instruction, including provision of supports and scaffolds. Goals for individual students, however, are not consistently delineated beyond the lesson level and data trends for individual students are not reviewed systematically to determine if there is a robust individual response to instruction within the differentiated small group structure.
 - Teacher teams work meticulously on analysis of student work and other assessment data. This information is used in a continuous cycle to inform and refine lesson planning. However, while students are monitored for progress, refinements tend to focus on class-wide and group-wide instructional adjustments with little evidence of monitoring of flexible groupings and their progress. As a result, goals for flexible groups tend to mirror the goals for the whole group as evidenced by the lack of differentiation to ensure that individual student goals are set and met within these groups to increase individual outcomes.
- Define all trends and patterns in student data to provide a more comprehensive view of instructional needs in the five pillars of reading, in order to more fully differentiate instruction to accelerate proficiency for all students. (2.3)
 - Teachers use existing tools, including running records, conferring notes, interim assessments, and authentic tasks, to identify trends in student performance and make continuous instructional decisions based on identified trends. However, tools utilized for identifying reading comprehension trends look at some components and not comprehensively at the four underlying pillars. Thus, this limits opportunities to accelerate comprehension for all students, as evidenced by poor response to instruction by some students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Alain L. Locke 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