

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

PS M242-Gwendolyn Powell Brown Computer School

Elementary school M242

**134 WEST 122 STREET
MANHATTAN
NY 10027**

Principal: DENISE GOMEZ

Dates of review: October 27 - 28, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Sara Carvajal

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Gwendolyn Powell Brown Computer School is an Elementary school with 195 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 80% Black and 17% Hispanic students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has strategically crafted integrated curricula that align key State standards and the school's magnet theme so that the resulting instruction molds students into constructive global citizens who view their world critically. (1.1)
 - The school's instructional leadership team has carefully studied the citywide expectations for introducing the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and subsequently infused rigorous projects, involving non-fiction reading and persuasive writing, into several of the International Baccalaureate (IB) "transdisciplinary" themes. This strategic planning is especially evident in curriculum maps for grades 3 through 5. As a result, teachers are positioned to expose all students, including students with disabilities and second language learners, to a rich curriculum that teaches critical thinking skills and concrete content knowledge through robust, meaningful units of study, such as "Sharing the Planet".
- Most classroom lessons include activities that allow for increased listening and thinking by students, resulting in their deeper understanding of complex ideas. (1.2)
 - Teachers across the school agree that students learn best when provided ample time to process new information and communicate it with their peers to clarify their thinking as they assume a stance in their learning. Therefore, teachers often encourage students to use accountable talk as practice to either agree or question each other's thinking. Consequently, most students are able to clearly articulate and defend their answers to questions, either using text during literacy and social studies discussions or with the support of manipulatives during math instruction.
- The instructional leadership team uses a wide array of data to effectively match the school's available resources with the most salient school-wide needs so that students' areas of growth are addressed efficiently and consistently. (1.3)
 - In alignment with the school's instructional goals, the principal has carefully matched internal coaches and contracted consultants with classrooms to provide a balance of demonstration lessons and weekly collaborative planning sessions with individual teachers and teams. A great investment has been made to assist second grade staff members in developing reading comprehension skills since baseline assessments and classroom visitation snapshots indicate that this subgroup requires immediate, intensive support across the subject areas. As a result, students as well as teachers benefit from the consistent team effort as evidenced by the students' growing ability to successfully complete assorted cooperative projects throughout their social studies based units.
- Teachers use a consistent set of interim assessments, which effectively measure student mastery of content and skills so that the strengths and needs of all students are readily identified and addressed accordingly. (2.2)
 - This year, the school is focused on refining one key assessment tool, homework, which has often been underutilized in the past. School leaders collaborate with teachers to transform the traditional daily exercise of subject matter recollection into a periodic opportunity for rubric-driven student creations of strong arguments, informational advertisements, and persuasive poetry. As a result,

- teachers are demonstrating a marked improvement in the quality of specific feedback they provide to students, and students are becoming increasingly interested in and producing more successful work products.
- Teachers across the school collect and organize a plethora of interim student data through periodic one-on-one conferencing, unit tests, writing samples in inquiry notebooks, and homework project assignments. In this way, individual teachers as well as teacher teams are equipped to tangibly discuss the ongoing needs of particular students on the grade and identify potential resources and strategies to support said students with supplemental learning opportunities, such as tutoring, during the school day.
 - Teachers benefit from frequent, informal 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)
 - The principal and assistant principal visit classrooms daily, so that all teachers receive frequent feedback on the effectiveness of their teaching beyond the formal observation structure. Most of the feedback is usually communicated through informal, private meetings between the administrator and teacher where the two speak to the classroom snapshot coupled with student work. As a result, both novice and veteran teachers are strengthening their questioning techniques so that students are pushed to delve deeply as they acquire transferable skills, such as the use of solid evidence in arguments.
 - There is an anticipated understanding that each teacher can expect an estimated minimum of five written support reports throughout the year, aligned with the Danielson framework. Several templates have been developed and utilized to validate teachers' strengths and prompt clear next steps with regard to establishing an accessible learning environment, designing coherent instruction, and using questioning and discussion techniques effectively. Consequently, the principal has begun using this informal data, coupled with student achievement data, and develops professional development plans for struggling teachers.
 - All members of the school community continually participate in purposeful professional learning opportunities with an eye for improving teacher practice and deepening student understanding in alignment with key State standards. (4.3)
 - Professional learning occurs in a tailored fashion, and most staff, including the principal, benefit from a variety of meaningful opportunities, including private consultation, team meetings, curriculum planning institutes and national conferences. Consequently, teachers are continually immersed in authentically familiarizing themselves with how the implementation of the CCLS and IB expectations best support student achievement and manifest their professional learning in classrooms throughout the site.
 - The principal has identified a balance of novice and veteran teachers to lead the facilitation of key work streams, including the grade-level inquiry work and the magnet program rollout. These teachers own the great responsibility of listening and synthesizing their colleagues' contributions and concerns, and ultimately communicating them to the principal. As a result, administrative decisions are made by a core-team construct, which includes the principal, and identifies potential areas for school improvement, such as the need for additional intensive coaching for targeted teachers.

What the school needs to improve

- Streamline the way by which individual teachers collect and organize rubric-driven and anecdotal data so that these may add value to a cohesive school-wide grading policy. (2.3)
 - Teachers across grades use a variety of data streams, including conference notes, homework projects, unit tests, and rubric commentary, to gauge individual student mastery of content and skills in assorted subject areas. However, in some grades, teachers do not utilize this data effectively in identifying the overall student trends within their respective classrooms. Consequently, without administrative support, not all teacher teams are equally adept in identifying grade-wide trends and addressing immediate needs.
 - Not all teachers share a common lens for weighing the various assessment methods to then consistently assign grades to students. As a result, the current grading policy does not fully support all families in authentically owning the performance trends of students.
- Further develop current systems for communicating student performance with parents so that increased family engagement occurs via reciprocal and ongoing conversations regarding ways by which to improve student achievement. (2.4)
 - School leadership makes a continual effort to communicate with students' families via personal interface, backpacked letters, phone calls, and email. Currently, the school is also implementing a new interim progress report communiqué. However, these instruments focus on achievement and progress exclusively. Therefore, some parents remain uncertain of the additional supports that the school has available beyond the regular school day to strengthen targeted deficiency areas of students.
 - The school is currently working in collaboration with one of its community-based organizations to educate parents on accessing student performance data through its recently purchased online tool. Additionally, the school is currently revising its traditional report card so that it aligns better with the IB and CCLS expectations to which students are now held. As a result, families indicate that they do not fully understand interim student data although they feel that the school is gaining momentum in making improvements to its communication structures on student performance.
- Formalize periodic check-ins, focused specifically on the school's systems for reflecting on performance data organization and performance report dissemination, so that structures are evaluated and revised in a timely fashion. (5.2)
 - At this time, several informal conversations have occurred to further improve assessment practices, data collection, and the evolving grading policy at the school. However, a calendar for systematically discussing necessary changes for evaluating and modifying necessary changes throughout the year has not yet been formalized. Therefore, some inconsistencies occur in the way teachers weigh assorted student assessments in determining student grades.
- Increase parent voice in school-wide decision making and planning so that the school develops an additional branch of ambassadors that enlists the broader local community in supporting college and career readiness efforts at the school. (3.1)

- School leadership and teachers analyze a great wealth of data, including students' academic achievement outcomes, teacher effectiveness summaries, online occurrence reports, and attendance trends, in order to identify the key school-wide goals which will benefit children most. However, at this time, parents express that they are just beginning to join the goal-setting conversation during monthly meetings. As such, the extended school community is not fully informed of this year's action plan for continued school improvement and consequently cannot yet support the school in its efforts.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Gwendolyn Powell Brown Computer 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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