

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**BATTERY PARK CITY SCHOOL
Early Childhood School M276**

**55 BATTERY PLACE
NEW YORK
NY 10001**

Principal: THERESA RUYTER

Dates of review: March 05 – 06, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Mariano Guzman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

BATTERY PARK CITY SCHOOL is an Early Childhood /Middle school with 567 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 7. The school population comprises 5% Black, 6% Hispanic, 42% White, 22% Asian students and 10% other students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 95%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has created a culture that values the social and emotional needs of the entire school community with targeted supports that promote personal and academic success (1.4)
 - The school's mission is to provide an education that fosters the intellectual, social, creative, and physical growth of each student in a safe and nurturing environment. The school strives to empower each student to achieve his or her greatest potential and inspire students to use that potential for the benefit of others and the world. The school's Theory of Action frames all conversations about learners and their strengths with problem solving using those strengths to address their challenges. The goal is to create a more tolerant, inclusive and positive learning environment where all can succeed. For example, through the Kindness and Justice Challenge, the school teaches students to reflect and modify behavior and maintain a respectful tone for all. This foundation has helped create a strong community of respectful learners with every child well known to almost every adult in the building. Students are guided in their exploration of the broader world through direct and meaningful experiences while reinforcing their responsibilities and connections to it. The school promotes the imagination as a crucial skill for conceiving the possible and the impossible, as questions are posed and problems solved. As evidence of their engagement, 94% of the student population responded to the NYC School Learning Environment Survey (LES)—12% higher than the City average, with 97% of the students agreeing that the adults at the school help them understand what they need to succeed in school.
- The school designs a broad standards-based curriculum aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) emphasizing rigorous habits and higher order skills for a variety of learners. (1.1)
 - School leadership and staff integrate the CCLS with the curricula aligned to State standards, providing students with learning experiences that emphasize a balance between content, the thinking skills necessary for success in the 21st century, and the literacy and math skills that will support them as lifelong learners. Non-fiction English language arts (ELA) units of study are grounded in disciplinary studies with performance tasks aimed at assessing how well students are able to engage in the skills and with content of a given unit. Faculty and leadership develop literacy units that have students engage in in-depth studies for social studies and science. In the middle school, students study constitutional issues through reading news articles, Court decisions, and informational texts that require analysis of arguments and the generation and justification of opinions grounded in evidence. The youngest students study Penguins and Elephants—pre-K lessons from the Lawrence Hall of Science, UC Berkeley. They are exposed to and are expected to learn complex vocabulary and engage in scientific thinking. Having written her doctoral dissertation on the topic of *Inclusive Classrooms*, Principal Ruyter has embraced the Special Education Reform. The school collaborated with District 75 and started an Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) program in the first grade. This has resulted in differentiated opportunities for all learners throughout the school.
- Teaching practices across classrooms are consistently informed by a common set of beliefs of how students learn best and differentiated so that students have multiple opportunities to have their needs met, resulting in increased learning outcomes. (1.2)

- The school's belief system is grounded in developmentally appropriate, child-centered pedagogy. As such, lessons are planned with grade level expectations in mind, provide opportunities for all children to learn engaging content, and provide opportunities to engage with tasks and resources that are developmentally appropriate. Lessons are differentiated for all students at their entry points across grades and classrooms for advanced, on level and intervention groups that provide ample scaffolds to improve their learning. Throughout classrooms there is evidence of inquiry learning and engaging projects. For example, teachers provide students with necessary prompts during questioning to ensure they are using academic vocabulary relevant to the lesson. Student work samples consistently reflect levels of engagement aligned to their academic levels. In addition, students and parents across grades report that work assignments are meaningful and allow all children to move toward their next learning level.
- School leaders make strategic organizational decisions in the use of resources to support the school's core values and instructional goals to support improvements in learning for all students. (1.3)
 - Although, as a new school, there are limited resources available, the school successfully improves learning outcomes for all students through the effective use of available resources. Among the many decisions made to maximize the use of resources, the principal decided not to hire an assistant principal at this time. She employs a collaborative approach to decision making and as such faculty members are involved in hiring and planning with outside consultants to support curriculum development. The school has designed its schedule to provide teachers with a maximum amount of planning time, allowing them to collaborate in small groups led by expert peers or in larger group sessions. The middle school math specialist, who is nationally certified in adolescent mathematics, teaches part time and coaches part time. She works with the lower grades and the sixth and seventh grade teachers in planning curricula and ways to differentiate teaching strategies. The Network math specialist works with the school in their approach to thinking about the performance assessment in math in order to meet the needs of all students. A middle school special education specialist teaches classes in addition to serving as Teacher Director of the middle school. Her work with middle school teachers includes specific strategies for differentiation and serves to balance the work of the principal—who has a background in Inclusive Education—with the lower grades. These organizational structures and the effective use of resources are well aligned to the school's goals and are evidenced in improvements in teacher effectiveness in developing appropriate lessons and tasks aligned to CCLS. Moreover, the impact of this strategic resource alignment is evidenced in the differentiated support and academic interventions designed to meet the needs of all students.
- Utilizing multiple forms of data, including assessment tasks aligned to the curricula, the school leader and faculty analyze student learning outcomes and make instructional decisions that strengthen classroom practices. (2.2)
 - The School Leadership Team (SLT) created a comprehensive educational plan (CEP) that emphasizes the importance of non-fiction reading and writing. Early in the year, faculty studied exemplars of ELA performance tasks from the Common Core Library and supporting their non-fiction curriculum, teacher teams and individual teachers developed performance-based assessments and CCLS rubrics. These are used in combination with student conference notes and running records to evaluate how well students are able to independently complete tasks of reading non-fiction texts and writing in response to them.

These end-of-unit “on demand” writing assessments provide instruction that models the targeted standards, allows students guided practice with targeted standards and provides opportunities for independent student practice directly aligned with targeted CCLS aligned to curriculum units that support students to achieve grade level proficiency.

- Through observation of classroom teaching combined with an analysis of learning outcomes, the school monitors teaching with clear expectations towards improving classroom practice. (4.1)
 - The school’s overarching instructional goal is to “engage all students in learning with cognitively demanding work and purposeful use of time.” This goal was formulated through using the Danielson framework. In collaboration with the principal, staff decided to focus intensely on two of the six Danielson indicators, designing coherent instruction, and engaging students in learning. These are especially relevant as the school undergoes rapid expansion with many teachers new to the profession. By using a detailed template developed through consensus, the principal provides focused and clear feedback to all staff, builds opportunities for conversations that supports shared language and pedagogy, and addresses CEP goals. Frequent observations allow the principal to observe teachers for successful implementation on feedback to support student growth. These visits also allow for joint planning and design between the principal and teachers, in particular new teachers. This allows for targeted professional development that is provided by the Teachers College Inclusive Classroom project (TCICP), outside literacy coaches, internal specialists, and peer leaders. As a result, the NYC School Learning Environment Survey reflects that 93% of the school’s faculty feel supported by the principal and their peers and are engaged in active and vibrant partnerships to promote professional learning that yields positive student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Further engage parents in school decision-making processes so they impact academic, social and behavioral needs of their children. (2.4)
 - Parents are delighted with the school and universally have high praise for the principal and staff. The school and staff communicate high expectations to students and families regarding academic performance, behavioral progress, and school culture and climate through newsletters, Family Fridays and other events hosted by the parent coordinator, as well as the school website. However, information regarding performance on CCLS and ongoing discussions to assist families in helping their children at home regarding student progress towards meeting class expectations is not consistent, thereby limiting family engagement in supporting the school’s focus on implementing the CCLS. Similarly, while parent SLT members are informed regarding school decisions and view themselves as key stakeholders, the lack of a widespread strategy to engage more families limits the opportunity to have their input in school decision-making potentially impacting the success of their children.
- Enhance communication to families so that all constituent groups are involved in setting goals that include higher levels of challenge in order to accelerate student learning. (3.4)
 - The school communicates high expectations to students and families regarding academic and behavioral performance through newsletters, a website, calendars and events hosted by the parent coordinator. While many of the families are well poised to support their children at home, some families indicate the need for

ongoing support from the school in preparing their children for the demands and expectations set forth by the CCLS, including college readiness. The absence of targeted support for some families limits parents in helping their children reach their potential.

- Improve structures to regularly evaluate and adjust curriculum, instructional and organizational practices in order to support the learning needs of all students in meeting the expectations of the CCLS. (5.1)
 - While the principal and teacher teams engage in regular reviews of curricula and instructional practices, the school lacks structures to evaluate and revise these areas across all grades and subjects to meet the full expectations of CCLS in order to ensure full alignment between policy and practice and maximize student outcomes. Similarly, the school is starting to refine its practice of regularly evaluating and adjusting organizational resources to better meet the learning needs of its students and the expectations of the CCLS. In the absence of ongoing articulated structures, the school's decision making process to inform curricular adjustments, aligned to the implementation of the CCLS, is restricted.
- Refine the process for evaluating the alignment and coherence between the use of data tools, teacher practice and the sharing of performance data with students and families in order to improve student outcomes. (5.2)
 - School leaders and faculty regularly evaluate and adjust assessments and grading practices. Concurrently, school leadership is refining systems to integrate CCLS into the assessment, evaluation, and adjustment of school practices so as to ensure coherence between school and classroom practices and the expectations of CCLS. The principal and faculty regularly inform students and families about progress regarding academic and behavioral gains and challenges. The school has not however adopted a school-wide system by which to utilize ongoing data to best inform students and families in a uniform way aimed at further improving student outcomes. Consequently, not all constituents are aware of students' specific needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: BATTERY PARK CITY 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	
1..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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