

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Special Music School

M859

**129 West 67 Street
New York
NY 10023**

Principal: Katherine Banucci-Smith

Dates of review: February 8 – 9, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Esther Friedman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

M859 is a K-8 school with 134 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 7% Black, 7% Hispanic, 60% White, 21% Asian, 4% multi-racial, and 1% Native American students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 95.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has developed a system of curriculum-based assessment that informs academic development and ongoing refinement of instructional practice as well as students' understanding of their progress.(2.2)
 - Teacher teams have developed assessments to establish learning goals for all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs), adding to summative data. To this they add ongoing assessments, including interim assessments, rubrics, checklists, conferring notes and student work products analyzed in teacher teams to further refine lessons and group students for differentiated instruction, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of ongoing student progress.
 - Checks for understanding are embedded in lessons across all classes. Students engage in setting unit goals and understand use of rubrics and checklists. Teachers utilize student logs, use exit slips as student work products, and collaboratively utilize work folders to measure ongoing progress. Students ask for clarification from peers in partner and whole-class activities. These procedures result in an atmosphere in which students can take intellectual risks and freely ask when they do not understand, and teachers make certain that all students understand what is taught during lessons and units.
- The principal and staff have worked to seamlessly integrate partnerships that support continued academic, social, career and cultural goals of all students and their families. (4.4)
 - The school's partnership with Kaufman Cultural Center provides a comprehensive specialized music program for each child, providing individual and small group instruction embedded into the academic program. Parents are included in this programming and provided strategies to support their child's musical talents. This results in highly accelerated learning, including music theory and practice, and prepares students to participate at increasingly high levels for career readiness.
 - Students practice musical craft, engage in authentic social justice activities and address social needs through musical partnerships including the Kaufman Cultural Center. An advisory program focuses on pro-social skills in which all students participate. Professional development shares strategies in these areas with all teachers. This results in an atmosphere in which communication between constituents is open and students can take intellectual risks to increase their potential.
- The school is engaged in a continuous process of developing and refining curriculum maps for varied subjects aligned to targeted State standards with an emphasis on challenging tasks that are authentic and rigorous.(1.1)
 - Teacher teams have built curriculum maps, units and lessons reflecting high-level thinking. Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS),

particularly those focused on nonfiction text and expository writing, have been integrated into these and continue to be refined based upon student response. This work is done in grade-band teacher teams resulting in coherence and consistency across classes and grades that support strong student outcomes.

- Teams have focused on developing collaborative projects and tasks that are rigorous in content. Lessons include a “research, think, talk” format that ensures development of background knowledge in complex, highly engaging topics, such as a unit studying biomes in one grade, a social action theme across a number of grades, and the school’s focus on music theory and practice across all grades. As a result, students engage in complex conversation within pairs and groups, understand and use models of logic and discourse, and can articulate their knowledge of complex topics both orally and in performance task work products.
- The school practices a coherent approach to learning through a comprehensive emphasis on authentic, differentiated tasks yielding rigorous levels of student thinking, discourse and engagement. (1.2)
 - The school uses a consistent instructional approach reflecting the value of collaborative student work, use of real-world tasks, and emphasis on highly rigorous content – often several grades above grade level –with engaging scenarios to promote student engagement and high levels of critical thinking. Peer-to-peer learning and support is evident in all classrooms, including specific, constructive critiques of work. This results in an approach to instruction and learning that yields high-level student talk and work products that are highly aligned to standards.
 - Use of authentic contexts for learning and problem solving form the basis of lessons and are differentiated through the use of multisensory formats and scaffolds to ensure that all students access lessons at suitable entry points. Rigor is ensured through teacher questioning that promotes high-level thinking, as do structures for student questioning, incorporating Bloom’s taxonomy and Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to guide rigor. Student engagement is supported through projects involving social justice topics. Teacher teams devote much time and effort in developing performance tasks that are complex, rigorous, authentic, and engaging. This results in classrooms in which all students work at a high level as evidenced by student products in work folders, notebooks, displays, and corroborated by rubric scores and teacher feedback on these products.
- The principal has made strategic budget and hiring decisions to accommodate the range of student and staff needs that address targeted instructional goals for school improvements. (1.3)
 - The principal has redistributed funds to support long-range goals. This allowed for the hiring of a school secretary, a full-day guidance counselor, a part-time English language arts (ELA) coach, 22 days of math coaching, a 1:1 paraprofessional to support a student with challenging behaviors, and an English as a second language (ESL) specialist. She has modified staffing assignments so that student and teacher support is comprehensive, including hiring a special education teacher who provides service to students and is a resource to staff in classrooms, supporting

work with students with disabilities, reinforcing use of strategies and progress monitoring tools across the curriculum. This has resulted in increasing the school's ability to meet students' individual instructional needs as evidenced by consistent growth in the number of students proficient in ELA and math.

- Staff meets in twice-weekly grade teams focused on curriculum mapping, lesson development and refinement, collaborative feedback and inquiry/study groups, which have developed a protocol for use of writing across subject areas. This has resulted in a coherent approach to the development of writing units and a consistency in instructional and peer-to-peer strategies used in writing across the school.
- The principal consistently communicates high expectations to the school community and provides structures to ensure that this message is reflected in school and classroom practices to support student growth. (3.4)
 - The principal provides resources, including a handbook of policy and procedures stressing curricular rigor. She works to establish a prioritized action plan works with each teacher to develop individual goals, building upon these with weekly updates. These are also reflected in her observational feedback. This has resulted in a school where the message about high expectations can be articulated by every constituent and can be seen in the level of content and tasks in every classroom.
 - The college and career message is consistently communicated to all students. Opportunities to work with professional musicians, engage in apprenticeships and in collaborations where writing and mathematics are tied to being a 21st-century musician. Consequently, there is a clear message of high expectations for all constituents regarding college and career readiness for all students.
- Teachers receive ongoing, specific and actionable feedback in consistent written and verbal formats creating next steps and staff development transparently tied to student outcomes. (4.1)
 - The principal provides frequent, differentiated, actionable low-inference feedback tied to analysis of student data. This feedback, along with peer support, adheres to the Danielson framework using low-inference transcripts and guiding questions to push teacher thinking towards instructional next steps congruent with school, teacher and student goals. This is carried over into the work of teacher teams resulting in consistent and coherent instructional practices across all subjects that guides professional growth for positive student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Create a more nuanced uniform protocol to assess component aspects of student work in literacy in order to set differentiated goals reflecting the component elements of reading and writing. (3.2)
 - The school uses tools including the DRA, Performance Series, analysis of student work, conferencing notes, core checklists and rubrics. Teacher

teams analyze this data and use it to guide instructional practice by setting goals for individuals and groups. However, there is little formal data collected to reveal needs in the component aspects of reading. As a result, data analysis is limited by the lack of this information, as is the ability to set learning goals focused on student outcomes.

- Teachers and teams analyze available data to set differentiated goals for students and groups, including identification of students having greater difficulty with expository as compared to narrative text. However, the data, while extensive, does not consistently include underlying components of reading, resulting in differentiation on many, but not all subcomponents of reading. These result in groupings which provide students with supports in a number of components of reading but not all components students might require for mastery of all goals.
- Create more transparent connections for all constituents between established school goals and daily practice ensuring that all goals are known to all.(3.1)
 - The entire school community can articulate the goal related to the use of expository text in current learning and parents are able to articulate all of the stated goals for the current year. However, other school goals are not fully known or articulated consistently by the school community resulting in inconsistent understanding of the scope of goals for all students.
 - There is emphasis on understanding the dual curriculum. All constituents, including students, know the demands of the program on student attention and time. This is reinforced through meetings, parent events, principal newsletter, website, email contact, and conversations with students. The school regularly communicates goals and benchmarks of the academic program to all students. However, some students are unable to describe how their work is measured, resulting in a reliance on numerical scores by students making it difficult for them to understand how a specific work product could be improved.
- Provide greater differentiation in professional development to reflect needs of all students and provide staff with additional leadership opportunities in providing differentiated professional development. (4.3)
 - There are many opportunities for teachers to learn from each other. Additionally, the principal provides opportunities for targeted professional development from the Network and strategic partners. However, while there is a great deal of focus on creating enriched learning opportunities for students, professional development is not fully differentiated to meet the needs of those students requiring additional supports. This results in supports that are not fully informed by the full range of professional development that some students might require.
 - There are numerous leadership opportunities provided to all staff to meet and share pedagogy, content and resources, using available data consistently to address student needs. However, there is inconsistent opportunity to engage in leadership practice that is comprehensive for individuals, resulting in succession plans that are undeveloped.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Special Music 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