

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Nathaniel Woodhull School

Elementary School Q035

**191-02 90th Ave.
Hollis, NY
11423**

Principal: Mark Dempsey

Dates of review: January 25 & 26, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Sherry Copeland

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Nathaniel Woodhull School is an elementary school with 652 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 39% Black, 32% Hispanic, 3% White, and 24% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 37% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 93%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders make organizational decisions, including budget and use of staff, to support their instructional goals that results in increased student success. (1.3)
 - The purchase of additional literacy resources, including materials and staff development, is well aligned to the school's goal to increase students' academic proficiency in literacy, specifically reading. A nonfiction computerized reading program has been purchased for the third grade since this grade underperformed the previous year. A Saturday Academy is funded to meet the specific literacy needs of English language learners (ELLs), Title 1 funds are used to pay for teacher trainers in literacy and math and special funding from political offices to upgrade technology programs. These organizational decisions impact on student performance as evidenced by an increase in proficiency on end of unit summative assessments in literacy.
 - School leaders strategically group students, assign teachers to meet instructional goals and share responsibility for meeting the needs of students in appropriate groupings for greatest impact. A data specialist is assigned mid-year to computerize and aggregate data from summative and formative assessments to share with teachers during inquiry team meetings. In addition, two teachers are placed to monitor student behaviors in the lunchroom resulting in a calmer, more productive student learning climate in the afternoon according to teachers. A coach/coordinator was designated to run the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) system and support staff in its implementation. These personnel assignments support the school's goal of improving student behavior and school tone. Furthermore, the school doubled capacity to deliver science instruction through additional faculty, increasing students' exposure to science curriculum and content as evidenced by meaningful displays of science student work.
- The school aligns curricula to Common Core Learning Standards, routinely integrating specific learning standards in tasks and other curriculum elements, to engage and improve learning outcomes for a variety of students. (1.1)
 - Teacher teams design monthly literacy and math curriculum maps aligned to CCLS (Common Core Learning Standards) using the Understanding by Design template. From these maps, units are developed and implemented as vehicles to deliver instruction in the selected CCLS. Assessments through performance tasks are embedded in units for each grade. As a result, student performance on benchmark tests given at the end of each unit since September has improved.
 - Curriculum includes educational tasks that are specifically designed for children at different levels of development. For example, the new reading program provides follow up tasks for students on different performance levels. These tasks allow teachers to plan for groups of students according to instructional needs which are determined by unit assessments. This results in an increase in deliberate, intentional instruction for children in small groups, which cognitively engages a diversity of learners.

- The school maintains a culture of positive attitude towards learning that supports the academic and personal growth of students impacting on students' social emotional skills and educational performance. (1.4)
 - The school has a group of at least three teachers who coordinate youth development through positive phone calls, home visits, and attendance monitoring. Students report that they are supported when they go to staff with concerns. The PBIS team meets monthly to discuss ways to achieve positive student behavior in the classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, and cafeteria and to develop new structures to improve student to student interactions. Students receive STARbuck rewards when they demonstrate safety, teamwork, accountability, and respect. The OORS (Online Occurrence Reporting System) shows a reduction in incidents when compared to a similar time frame from last year, serving as evidence that students are learning to become appropriately responsive in the school setting.
 - The school has an environment that engages students and promotes their desire to learn and succeed. One child reported, "I love to write. Just give me pen and paper and I let my imagination loose. I want to be an author, a teacher, or a lawyer." Children are taught to be reflective and look at their own and other students' work for areas of strength and areas for growth in writing. Students speak about their individual goals in their notebooks and how they know what they need to get better at by conferring with their teachers, resulting in a positive effect on educational performance.
- Teachers use data from summative and classroom level assessments to identify strengths and needs of students and to shape instructional decisions that influence student learning outcomes. (2.2)
 - Teams of teachers and the data specialist use grade level rubrics and end of unit summary assessments aligned to the school's curricula and standards to make instructional decisions. From this data analysis, the fourth grade team determined that students needed strategies to better use graphic organizers that record significant details from informational text. In response to this need, multiple graphic organizers have been modeled for and utilized by the students, resulting in instruction that is more specific to students' needs.
 - Teachers analyze periodic data and classroom level assessments to identify student's strengths and needs, determine student progress and track improvement for sub-groups and students in the bottom third. For example, assessment data was used to determine student competencies and design individualized instruction for vocabulary development, fluency, and text comprehension resulting in instructional decisions that respond to these identified needs of students.
- School leaders and faculty use tools to aggregate and organize data to identify trends that inform instruction and curriculum. (2.3P)
 - School leaders and coaches use Engrade to organize class and student data from assessments and classroom assignments. This information is used to identify group and individual trends in literacy and math, and address instructional gaps in student performance through school level decisions, such as the purchase of specific literacy and math materials and curricula. Teams of teachers along with the data specialist use e-gradebooks to capture student trends from ARIS and reading data sources. Fifth grade data identified trends in literacy allowing those teachers to focus on the specific skills of word

meaning in context and inferring. Teachers used this data to inform their practice to reteach these specific skills using different content resulting in progress on end of unit exams.

Areas for improvement

- Further engage families in school decision making to create a culture of shared commitment to understand and support students' progress. (2.4)
 - The school invites parents to select from a menu of school activities such as a cultural fair and a talent show. A star of the month award program is one element of PTA meeting agendas designed by the principal as a method of involving parents. However, there are limited opportunities for families to participate in critical decision-making such as the writing of the CEP (Comprehensive Education Plan). In fact, on interview, several parents report that school leaders often overlook their suggestions and recommendations. Consequently, families have little voice in advancing student progress and school-wide expectations.
 - School leaders encourage parents to access the Acuity website for predictive information related to their child's anticipated progress and have provided workshops on the use of ARIS to support parents' understanding of their child's performance. Student performance is also communicated through report card evaluations, work samples, and weekly assessments. Yet, parents struggle to fully understand their child's progress and how to support them at home. In addition, parents report that grades given on the report card are inconsistent with on-going classroom performance data. This disparity prevents parents from fully understanding their child's progress toward school expectations, thus limiting their ability to support their child's advancement.
- Strengthen capacity to use data to regularly assess the efficacy of teacher teams and leadership development opportunities and to support efforts toward fostering focused professional collaboration. (5.4)
 - Evaluation of the effectiveness of teacher teams includes unstructured, inconsistent observations, informal conversations, and sharing of team minutes during monthly faculty conferences when time allows. A lack of formal structures that regularly evaluate professional collaborations, yields weak formative and summative data and results in the school grappling to build pedagogical and leadership capacity.
 - School leaders have begun to organize their strategies for evaluating current structures that develop and distribute school leadership by observing workshops in process and by interviewing the chairpersons of various school-based committees. However, evaluations are not yet effective because they lack consistency and formality. Consequently, there is little movement toward the development of teachers as leaders.
- Differentiate student learning opportunities within and across classrooms through instructional strategies that accommodate multiple levels of student thinking and participation leading to meaningful work and conversation. (1.2)
 - Teaching strategies, questioning, and routines vary within and across classrooms. However, the approach to teaching in many classrooms does not include differentiated instructional strategies or incorporate multiple entry

points into lessons. In some classes, teachers were read directly from teacher's manuals when conducting whole group lessons. Consequently, children with varying needs are provided with uneven opportunities to learn.

- In some classrooms there was clear evidence of student engagement and participation in learning. For example, in one fifth grade class whole group instruction led to breakout groups on three levels with different assignments and with each producing different work products. However, in many classrooms observations reveal that teachers use scripted lessons and common assignments resulting in less engaging tasks, in work products that reveal limited learning, and in few discussions of value between students.
- Provide training and a system of accountability for staff and families that communicate high expectations for instruction and performance so that they can support students to move toward and achieve the next level. (3.4)
 - The leadership team communicates high expectations to the staff by providing literature promoting research-based best practices for instruction and using snapshots of teacher effectiveness focusing on planning, student engagement and high quality questions to hold teachers accountable. However, the school does not have a well established system to provide support toward pedagogical expectations for all staff members. For example, the professional development schedule through December indicates that only one teacher per grade received formal training for the new literacy program and only one teacher in the school received outside training in higher order questioning. Consequently, there are inconsistent understandings among teaching staff related to strategies for meeting high expectations that are resulting in lower student achievement.
 - The school communicates high expectations to families by monitoring attendance and distributing information about curriculum goals at Back to School Night, parent-teacher conferences, and PTA meetings. However, parents are offered limited opportunities to learn how to prepare their children to perform better in school as evidenced by their articulated lack of knowledge of the Common Core Learning Standards and academic goals. In addition, parent workshop offerings are not adequately advertised, resulting in poor attendance and therefore ineffective dispersal of information influencing parent's capacity to meaningfully influence their child's achievement.
- Further develop an effective observation system that provides customized feedback and next steps to inform assignments, teacher support and tenure decisions in order to improve pedagogy and student achievement (4.1)
 - A system to inform decisions related to professional development and staffing is being developed by school leaders. Currently, observation notes and student work are reviewed for this purpose. However, an effective system is not yet fully designed and firmly established. Therefore, efforts toward leveraging change and accelerating student learning has been minimized.
 - School leaders review student work and conduct observations using a research-based framework and provide informal feedback with strategies for next steps. However, this occurs infrequently which hinders timeliness to foster professional growth and reflection. As a result, the lack of on-going timely adjustments made to enhance instructional practices hinders the progression of student achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Nathaniel Woodhull 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's 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