

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

I.S. 061 Leonardo Da Vinci
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle School Q061

98-50 50 AVENUE
QUEENS
NY 11368

Principal: JOSEPH J. LISA

Dates of review: February 13,14,and15, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

I.S. 061 Leonardo Da Vinci is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 2238 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 5% Black, 82% Hispanic, 2% White, 11% Asian students and 0% other students. The student body includes 34% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 93.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has infused the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) into their existing curricula, including the Arts and technology, to create a higher level of learning so that students' needs are being met. (1.1)
 - Constructing viable arguments and critiquing the reasoning of others has been integrated into the curriculum and a "college readiness" framework that all teachers use to measure student growth over time. Since this implementation, teachers and students have noted an increase in levels of challenging assignments across grades and subjects, and an increase in student achievement on targeted math tasks. Using students' reflection sheets and pre- and post tests from computer generated Proper Data assessments, since September, students in Grade 6 have shown a 45% increase in post test scores regarding practical applications to complete quadratic equations.
 - All content area curricula has been revised and aligned to the CCLS and State standards. This has increased the rigor of the curriculum and teacher expectations. Student work was used in Social Studies to modify the pacing calendar so that all students are challenged at their existing level. As a result, students with disabilities showed an increase in post assessment test scores in skills such as comprehension of text and inferences. In the Arts, data is used to determine students' baseline skills and provide instruction towards individual goals that are clearly stated on student goal sheets. As an example, lesson plans were revised in drama so that students would better grasp the concepts of articulation and voice usage providing for higher levels of stage expression and the ability to project voice from the stage to the audience.
- Teachers offer a clear philosophy about students' best practices, aligned to the curriculum and varying in levels of activities, so that meaningful, differentiated and rigorous student work is produced. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms, practices reflect the school's commitment to address students' needs through work stations and individual instruction for ongoing support. Students participate in well planned, data driven lessons reflective of tiered work periods highlighting real world applications. As a result, sixth grade ELLs are improving in their ability to read twin texts and identify the author's purpose and tone of the story.
 - Teachers use data to plan lessons and develop differentiated activities. Varying questioning strategies and literacy based activities at work stations are developed to help all learners meet their goals. As an outgrowth of this work, English Language Learners (ELLs) have increased their English Language arts skills by 4% since November.
- The school's commitment to success is provided in the innovative use of resources, including time and teacher assignments, aligned to the school's instructional goals to engage students in challenging tasks for increased success. (1.3)
 - Based on the large population of students, the school is divided into five academies, each with its own assistant principal, dean and guidance counselor. This aligns to the school's instructional goals to support improvements in behavioral concerns for social-emotional growth and prepares students for post

secondary success. This decision has been deemed successful as the tone of the school is energized yet peaceful, and consistently conducive to learning as reflected in monthly behavior logs showing improvements. Teachers are grouped in common planning teams based on subject and grade level and have targeted groups of students during the extended day that did not make adequate progress on the ELA State tests. Inquiry and Common Planning Teacher Teams meet a minimum of one time per week, to discuss student progress, plan for curriculum reform and assess their practice. Small groups of struggling students are assisted in reading skills through a newly purchased computer based program; Achieve 3000 and phonics enriched, Rewards Reading Program. Teachers and parents posit that students are motivated by these programs as evidenced by their willingness to spend more time on homework tasks, find success in their learning and be more confident in reading challenging text.

- The school develops and utilizes a wide range of assessments aligned to key standards to analyze students' learning outcomes as a vehicle to modify instructional decisions and meet all students' goals, in particular ELLs. (2.2)
 - Teacher designed rubrics aligned to the schools' key standards to infuse text complexity, cite specific text evidence, summarize specific supporting details and analyze nonfiction twin text to compare author's purpose enabling teachers to determine what practices are working and share those findings at inquiry meetings. In Grade 7 ELA classes an analysis of the data demonstrated an increase in the class proficiency average from 35% to 73% in the first unit of study as measured by the teacher designed unit post assessment.
 - In order to support the 800 plus students who are recognized as ELLs in this school, data was examined and vocabulary was identified as an area in need of intervention. Tier II vocabulary words from New York State assessments were words that were unfamiliar to students. Word Generation, a research-based vocabulary program was adopted to teach words through the curriculum. Based on pre and post unit assessments, 76% of the 34 sixth grade ELLs in bilingual classes have shown gains in at least one of the three vocabulary strands addressed. Furthermore, across grades, 50% of ELL classes have shown gains on all CCLS vocabulary standards strengthening students' abilities to transfer knowledge across content areas.
- The school is a nurturing learning community where all constituents share opportunities to grow academically and socially to achieve their personal best. (1.4)
 - In alignment with the results of the school's Learning Environment Survey and to increase the existing nurturing culture of the school, a Student Council was created for each academy to meet monthly and make decisions regarding academy and school initiatives. School surveys through Google Docs have also been filtered out in order to obtain feedback regarding events held at the school and ideas for future school activities. As a result, lunch incidents have decreased as indicated on the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) in the areas of inappropriate behavior towards others.
 - Students discuss the philanthropic culture of the school and the strong awareness towards social issues and helping those less fortunate. An activity called "Rachel's Challenge" connected the tragedy at Columbine High School to creating a chain reaction for developing positive activities at I.S. 61. One hundred students and 20 staff members are leading the school in a movement initiating community projects that help students appreciate helping others. Consequently, students state that they feel very much supported in their efforts to meet the high

standards the school has set for them and enjoy the reflection portion of their goal sheets which helps them express their learning processes and acts as a guide towards future improvements in all content areas.

- Families have opportunities to be involved in their children's learning and to monitor their progress through regular communications with the school. (2.4)
 - Parents expressed gratitude at the way the administration and teachers understand their children and communicate that understanding to parents. In addition to student goal sheets which parents sign for each unit of study across the grades, parents marvel at the level of accessibility of each child's assistant principal, guidance counselor and dean who answers emails regularly and conferences with their child and the parent regularly and as needed. It was purposeful to parents that these meetings are not just focused on behavior, but clearly aligned to post secondary steps towards achievement.
 - Parents feel very supported by the school's parent coordinator who "is their voice and heart" for making decisions to support their children. Together they participate in workshops to better understand the in addition to the social-emotional policies of the school. Parents were involved in the selection process of the "Talents" programs which are offered to students in cycles throughout the year. Parents requested and school leaders afforded them the opportunity to have drama and art remain as choices enabling all students the chance to be exposed to these areas of the curriculum.

What the school needs to improve

- Build upon the process of tracking goals and student progress so that all teachers are able to provide transparent evidence that effective instruction and needed adjustments to lesson plans are impacting student achievement. (3.3)
 - Teachers have been armed with a myriad of data to track students' progress and adjust school-wide goals. Teachers are planning lessons based on Acuity data, summative test scores and unit driven Prosper assessment results enabling them to create a pre and post test providing immediate results through the scanning process. Although these results are shared with the school community, at this time it is difficult to find transparent, well articulated connections between the adjustments that have been made to school wide plans and how each adjustment is consistently supported by all constituents. The lack of transparency hinders support of stakeholders to identify areas in need of adjustment for growth.
 - The new initiative of student goal sheets has offered students and parents a lens into the scaffolded work that is being offered and the expectations of the required end products. Although CCLS is infused into the curriculum, parents are requesting more information around the theory and process of the new standards in order to effectively implement support and enrichment strategies into everyday practice so that their children can practice the concepts at home. Thus, the limited information to parents around the CCLS may hinder opportunities for some in helping their children to increase academic proficiency.
- Deepen the connection between the curriculum, the expanded work of inquiry teams and professional development so that all teachers are able to regularly evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes. (4.3)

- Teachers were surveyed at the beginning of the school year to determine their professional development needs and requests. A school wide session in November captured activities aligned to the schools' goals and CCLS tasks. At this time there is limited evidence to show that professional learning is effective in connection with school leaders' observations, teacher practice and students' work using the CCLS tasks as the specific impact on adult learning is not documented to show targeted student results.
- Key staff members receive professional development throughout the year so that they can analyze best practices and determine which strategies are creating the greatest improvement in student progress. However the same supports are not evident for inter-visitations, which are loosely aligned to improved outcomes. Teacher and student work is reviewed, but not yet in connection to specific classroom improvements so that school goals can be met. Consequently, the lack of professional development for all teachers on identifying best practices during inter-visitations lessens opportunities to align effective practices and student work in order to yield increases in closing the achievement gap.
- Further develop the present system of effectively monitoring teaching practices with a specific focus on improving instructional strengths that align to students' needs with a theory of action that is measurable and supported by all constituents. (4.1)
 - The administration is very involved in the development of effective teacher instructional practices. Although timely, data-driven feedback is provided through the use of two digital observation tools called PD 360 and My School Binder, formal observations are not targeting specific instructional needs or a succinct developmental plan so that recommendations can have a direct link to the effectiveness of teachers' practice as seen in student work products over time.
 - Professional development is facilitated for the staff based on a needs assessment. Although key staff members are mentoring those in need of assistance, the process is not yet transparent to link improved student performance to informed decisions made as a result of the staff development. This limits opportunities to document effective practices that are working and adopt new methods to meet students' needs.
- Continue to build capacity and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals for all students in order to improve instructional practices and student performance. (5.3)
 - School leaders have a system for planning, monitoring and revising long term goals to meet school-wide expectations. Data is available to show student progress, teacher success and CCLS next steps. Even though this structure is in place it is difficult to determine the rationale for the plans and the long-range impact each one will have on student and teacher success. Albeit a rationale, the outcomes become misaligned.
 - School leaders have a pulse on the strengths and needs of the school. Moving forward, interim goals are clearly identified to meet targets. At this time it is clear that leaders can talk about the reason for each goal related to data accrued, but there is a limited ownership of goals by the faculty so that they can be seen in classroom practice across grades and content areas. As a result, it is difficult to identify areas where improvements in academic plans are needed.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: I.S. 061 Leonardo Da Vinci	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
-----------	-----------------------	----------	-------------------	----------	-------------------	-----------	-----------------------