

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. 129 Patricia Larkin
Elementary school Q129

128-02 7 AVENUE
QUEENS
NY 11356

Principal: MARILYN ALESİ

Dates of review: October 17-18, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Danielle DiMango

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 129 Patricia Larkin is an Elementary school with 1014 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 49% Hispanic, 30% Asian students and 19% other students. The student body includes 14.9% English language learners and 13.6% 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 94.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Embedded in the school culture is the integration of child development supports where students and staff work collaboratively to accelerate academic and social/emotional growth. (4.4)
 - The school based support team works with teachers to integrate child development best practices into the classroom environment. Guidance counselors and the school psychologists both observe and work with struggling students and provide systems for monitoring and intervention of social/emotional skills. These strategies are then reinforced with parents through a variety of workshops and consistent outreach. The goal around this collaboration is to develop an environment where students feel supported and are “prepared to learn.” This has had an impact on the decisions that teachers make in terms of setting goals for students and communications to parents as they relate to personal growth and academic outcomes. Students express that parents and teachers work together to support their learning.
 - Beginning last year, the guidance department formed a partnership with various SUNY schools as a means to support students and their families on the path to college and career readiness. Students work collaboratively to study the different colleges and the specific areas in which they specialize. Simultaneously, parents are receiving training on the Common Core Learning Standards and the path to college and career readiness through book clubs and workshops. As part of the project, students must connect “skills that I learned at PS 129” to the college they are studying and present their work to the school community. This project allows for students to engage in authentic learning opportunities where they make connections to the skills they are taught and how they apply to the world around them.
- The school uses a range of data and programs to guide school practices that sustain student development. (1.4)
 - The faculty analyzes and acts upon information gathered from a variety of sources including punctuality and attendance charts, behavior plans, the School Environment Survey, and guidance and academic referrals. Interventions are immediately put into place to address any areas of concern resulting in a minimal number of safety or behavioral incidents and an attendance rate that is consistently over 94%.
 - The school provides students with many opportunities to be involved in the community. Students make the morning announcements each day and fifth graders lead a “Fitness Minute” every day over the loud-speaker. Every year the student government is elected in November to coincide with national elections. The student representatives are involved with the coordination of community events like the talent show, service programs, college day, and the nutrition campaign. These initiatives involve all students in a range of school events while developing the leadership skills of student representatives and upper grade students.

- The principal makes strategic organizational decisions that promote shared decision making on the teacher team level and result in coordinated efforts to improve pedagogy and student learning. (1.3)
 - o The school embraces the role that technology plays in student learning. Computers are available for student use in every classroom as well as a full computer lab with a technology teacher where students engage in projects related to Science and Social Studies. Last year, smart boards were installed in every classroom in grades second through fifth and all teachers in these grades participated in training to align this technology with their lessons. Teachers are using SMART technology and a variety of other on line resources to effectively plan and implement units of study that focus on increasing non-fiction reading and writing skills aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards. This focus on incorporating technology in the classrooms provides students and staff with instructional tools to enhance student learning opportunities and work products.
 - o The principal has organized the school program to allow for teacher teams to meet once a week as an inquiry team, twice a month in grade meetings as well as common preparation periods. Teachers take full advantage of this time and are engaging in looking at student work samples in writing. They also work on aligning curriculum to the common core standards at every grade level to improve instructional practice and develop challenging academic tasks for the students they teach.
- Teachers have developed school wide assessments as a means to drive instruction and make decisions about student learning (2.2)
 - o As part of the curriculum development throughout the school, teacher teams have created pre assessments and rubrics in writing and math for each unit. They are using these assessments to gauge where students are, to make adjustments to the curriculum as necessary on the team and classroom level and to use as benchmarking tools to check for understanding throughout units of study to improve student outcomes.
- Teachers work effectively in structured inquiry teams resulting in coordinated efforts to improve pedagogy and student learning. (4.2)
 - o Teacher teams are currently assigned by grade and engaged in aligning curriculum maps to the common core standards. They are using student work as a baseline to measure student skill levels as they relate to meeting the expectations of the Common Core and are developing units of study and performance tasks. As a result, individual teachers and teacher teams are embedding student needs and goal setting as part of their curricular development practice to better focus on student growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the use of differentiated learning activities and instructional strategies to provide appropriate challenges that maximize student learning opportunities. (1.2)
 - o Some classrooms showed evidence of differentiated support for students. However, in other classes, differentiated tasks did not support the instructional needs of the students they were assigned, particularly English language learners

- and lower performing students. This results in limited participation in the lesson for some students and their ability to produce meaningful work products.
- o Lessons in some classrooms were planned with learning activities and questioning strategies that led to active participation and student understanding of content. In other classrooms, activities were completely teacher directed and students followed scripted assignments that did not lead to meaningful work products. These inconsistent instructional practices lead to uneven levels of student thinking and engagement in their learning.
 - Develop effective action plans based on data and informed through a collaborative needs assessment process in order to close school wide achievement gaps. (3.1)
 - o Although the principal engages in goal setting for the school, rigorous evaluation of data that shows negative trends or areas of need, such as the school progress report results, is absent from this process. This lack of a formative and summative data guided evaluation and action planning on the school wide level limits change in student progress within the school
 - o The principal sends goals to the teachers for their input and comments but teachers and parents do not engage in a comprehensive school wide needs assessment and goal planning process. Lack of participation in this process prevents all stakeholders from engaging the development of school wide plans that actively support improving student outcomes.
 - Establish a cohesive school level system for tracking student progress, including student subgroups, as a means to adjust plans and goals throughout the year to provide appropriate supports for students (3.3)
 - o Teacher teams regularly track student progress and the administration looks at various types of school based data such as Fountas and Pinnell levels, report cards and student work products. However, this administrative process is not used to track progress or make adjustments to plans and goals at the school level throughout the school year. This lack of connection between data and school based interim decision making limits the tracking of student progress across grades both horizontally and vertically, hindering the ability to make informed adjustments to support and enrich programs throughout the school.
 - Design a transparent system for measuring teacher effectiveness to monitor the work of teacher teams as it relates to teacher development and leadership capacity. (5.4)
 - o Currently, the school administration attends grade meetings weekly to provide feedback to each team on their work. However, systems that include looking at data to evaluate the connection between teacher inquiry, student outcomes and rigorous learning across grades and classrooms is developing which limits coherence between the needs of the school and professional collaborations.
 - o The principal selects teachers on each grade team level to serve as a liaison between the administration and the work of teacher teams. However, there are no current systems in place for administration to identify and support the development of teacher leaders in any other capacity within the school structure limiting distributive leadership opportunities.

- Formalize systems to evaluate school wide progress of long term and interim goals in order to monitor and scaffold revisions over time to improve teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. (5.3)
 - Although school wide goals reflect alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and focus on improving instructional practice and student progress, particularly in the fourth and fifth grades in English Language Arts and Math, the annual planning process is more compliant than strategic and does not demonstrate collaborative, multi-year expectations and end points around student performance or improved pedagogy. Additionally, systems that measure student and teacher growth relating to these goals are not clear or consistent making it difficult to gauge the effectiveness of school based decisions and the goals and action plans formed around them.
 - School leaders have provided teachers with training in the use of tools such as conference notes and periodic assessments such as Acuity, Everyday Math pre and post tests and Teacher's College reading assessments in order to identify progress and make instructional adjustments throughout the year. However, the administration has just begun establishing systems and timeframes to use these tools and other progress measuring structures on a larger scale as a means to systematically benchmark the effectiveness of interim goals on curriculum and instruction and its impact on teacher efficacy and student progress. This current process limits the school's ability to identify where improvements are necessary and the ability to make timely adjustments to school wide plans during the school year.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. 129 Patricia Larkin	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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