

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

PS 154

75-02 162 street  
Queens  
NY 11366

Principal: Danielle Giunta

Dates of review: November 28, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Danielle DiMango

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

PS 154 is an Elementary school with 650 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 10.6% Black, 22.5% Hispanic, 49.2% Asian and 17.7% other students. The student body includes 18.8% English language learners and 9.2% special education students with 5.38% of special education students in least restrictive environment and 3.9% of special education students in more restrictive environment. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010-2011 was 95.3%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is well-developed.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions around instruction that align curriculum to key standards to challenge all learners. (1.1)
  - o Last year the school began the work of aligning the Common Core learning standards with their current curriculum maps. Through careful analysis of student work, pre-assessments and item skills analysis, the school selected key standards in ELA and Math and aligned the skills of opinion and argument into all content and grade level curriculum maps and tasks. Students are expected to defend, argue and use evidence to support their learning in all subjects. Teacher and student generated rubrics are used to evaluate student work products as they relate to both key standards and the school wide common core focus. This effort around tailoring the curriculum to meet the needs of students has closed learning gaps and has led to an overall increase of 6.3% in school-wide state English scores and an overall increase of 4% in school-wide Math scores supporting a change from a C to an A in the student progress category on the school's yearly Progress Report.
  - o Within all grades, teachers have developed units of study and aligned tasks to the school wide focus. Student activities and work products are scaffold across grades and content areas and contain supports, such as tiered questioning, visual aids, manipulatives and leveled texts that allow student subgroups to participate in higher order curricular expectations. Within classrooms, students are able to explain the skills and strategies they are learning and appropriately apply them to content in order to problem solve or extend their thinking around a particular assignment. This careful curricula planning provides opportunities for all learners to work towards meeting standards using cognitively appropriate skills to push them to the next level of understanding.
- The principal has clear systems to monitor and revise long and short term goals relating to student outcomes, teacher effectiveness and the expectations of the common core learning standards. (5.3)
  - o The administration supports the movement of school wide goals through frequent observation and feedback sessions with individual and teams of teachers. Through evaluation of instructional practice, student data, student work products and collaborative meetings with teachers, the principal continuously assesses the effectiveness of school wide goals. As a result of this process, teachers have built a culture where they actively engage in monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning. For example, last year many school inquiry teams focused on the use of graphic organizers to support student voice in writing. Through continuous assessment of student work and feedback from the administration, teachers asked for more professional development around the effective use of organizers to improve voice in writing. Through this work, the teachers affected a change strategy within the building and this year their goals have evolved to integrate the use of thinking maps to enhance writing skills. Additionally, it has helped improve teacher evaluation of student work, enhanced the culture of collaboration around teacher effectiveness and guided teacher understanding of the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards making the curricular work around them more meaningful.

- The school wide belief of student-centered learning is demonstrated through high levels of student engagement and continued reflection of student work products. (1.2)
  - o Classroom learning environments in all grade levels are structured so they are directed by student initiated inquiry. Mini lessons and group tasks center on essential questions. Classroom time is structured to provide students with opportunities to engage in decision making and self reflection where real life situations scaffold to provide multiple entry points for a variety of learners. For example, through school wide initiatives such as math problem of the day and book of the month, students are provided with tiered materials, such as vocabulary lists, tailored manipulatives or graphic organizers to work through their tasks and are expected to articulate the how and why of their answers. Students are then expected to provide frequent feedback to their peers through peer editing and student work celebrations. As a result of this structure, students have high levels of autonomy and engagement in their learning and can express their strengths and areas of need as it relates to their work.
- The principal is a strategic planner who uses resources, staff and student time effectively to improve the quality of student work. (1.3)
  - o Each year, the principal uses multiple sources of data such as state exams, NYSESLAT results, ACUITY and Teachers College benchmarks in order to inform teacher placement within grades or inquiry teams. Decisions are based on where a teacher can improve student outcomes to eliminate achievement gaps and also to provide opportunities for staff to work with colleagues that will help them grow professionally. An example of this effective planning was the collaborative decision made with the staff to deliver related services within the classrooms instead of using the pull out model. Additionally, the principal assigned related service teachers to an inquiry team to study student work focusing on the school wide writing rubric to develop instructional supports that move struggling learners towards achieving key writing standards. As a result of organizational decisions such as this, English language learners have shown growth on NYSESLAT scores over time and student subgroups including the students included in the lowest third citywide have shown improvements in both ELA and Math state exams. Additionally, there is increasing consistency within the school curriculum both within and across grade levels.
- School leaders and teachers use effective assessments which enable them to make informed instructional decisions and adjustments to improve student learning. (2.2)
  - o Teachers on every grade level use on-demand writing assessments aligned to a school wide writing rubric as well as Teachers College running record data, Everyday Math pre and post assessments, Acuity assessments, teacher conference notes and exit slips aligned to chosen math strands and literacy skills. Student work products are then analyzed and related to student data to identify gaps in instructional practice to make adjustments to curriculum as necessary. As a result of this practice, teachers discovered a need to develop better tools to isolate student reading comprehension skills and restructured assessments to measure literal and inferential responses that led to appropriate modifications to curriculum. Additionally, math tasks were developed and assessed focusing on key target areas such as number sense and operations, parts to whole and measurement. This has resulted in improved assessment of learning by teachers and has improved student reading levels and math skill competency in all grades within the school.

- o Checkpoints, reflection sheets and student friendly rubrics are built into classroom activities to allow for ongoing assessments and checks for understanding throughout lessons. Students use the skills and strategies they are taught and the tools available to give and receive feedback during the learning process. They are also expected to articulate to their teachers and peers what they have learned and their next learning steps.
- There is a cohesive vision related to the strengths and needs of the school which is supported by clear long and short range goals that improve student achievement. (3.1)
  - o Each year, the principal engages the staff in the process of a detailed needs assessment and the development of school level goals and action plans. This year the school focus is around improving teacher effectiveness and student outcomes through the infusion of Common Core Learning Standards into the curriculum, engaging students in rigorous tasks, and providing frequent feedback to teachers around higher order questioning. The school has in place clear benchmarks and targets to monitor student growth, including student subgroups and expectations around closing the achievement gaps. Teachers are then provided opportunities to develop goals aligned to the needs of the school and the needs revealed through pre assessments and submit them to the administration to monitor for alignment. Teachers then continuously analyze student outcomes through weekly inquiry work. Through this process of collaborative and aligned goal setting and action planning, student math performance has improved significantly as evidenced in student work products and school based and state assessment results.
- Teachers collaborate frequently to assess student work, plan together to implement Common Core Learning Standards and share best practices that lead to improved student outcomes (4.2)
  - o Grade teams meet weekly and are currently evaluating student work to look for trends revealed through school wide writing benchmarks and key skills addressed within the curriculum. They have developed additional skill grids to infuse Common Core expectations into current curriculum, organized target population groups and have begun evaluating where students fall in relation to these skills. As a result of this process, fourth grade teachers are revising units of study to incorporate activating prior knowledge, describing main idea, summarizing and strategies to use to effectively analyze and answer questions. Student progress will be measured against Common Core task bundles that include extensions and supports to effectively evaluate student performance within the standards.
  - o School wide inquiry work has resulted in a collaborative environment where teachers are empowered to make decisions around curriculum, assessment and instruction aimed at improving student learning. This shared leadership has fostered a culture of collaboration where teachers select an area of development, research and investigate instructional practices, develop curriculum and lessons and evaluate their work through peer feedback, intervisitations and the evaluation of student work products. As a result of one round of study, teachers explored an area of student weakness in math regarding the ability to relate measurements to real life experiences. After examining student work, the team realized that student difficulty with content area vocabulary in math was impacting student outcomes. From this work, teachers in grades 3-5 asked for and received professional development from Lucy West and collaborated to develop lessons and problem of the day activities that address this area of

weakness. This work has led to teachers' ability to improve instructional practice and effectively meet the needs of the students they teach.

## What the school needs to improve

- Expand professional development opportunities to support teachers new to the building in meeting the needs of student subgroups. (4.1)
  - o Although the school has an inclusive culture, there are no programs in place to provide additional supports to familiarize teachers new to the building to the rigorous instructional vision nor are there differentiated plans of supports for newer teachers effecting consistent teacher growth necessary to move academic outcomes forward.
  - o Currently the structure of supports for teachers around meeting the needs students with disabilities and English language learners is provided through teachers with instructional expertise in these areas. However, this staff development process is not fully managed by school leaders. In addition, observation cycles do not frequently provide feedback to teachers that address this area of pedagogy which and has led, in some teacher collaborations, to a reliance on service providers to modify the curriculum affecting teacher progress in this area.
- Ensure that all constituents are involved in youth development programs to support student social/emotional growth and academic success. (4.4)
  - o Although the school has youth development programs such as student of the month, Better Me, social skills groups, anti-bullying programs and Respect for All training; professional development is not offered to teachers to support these initiatives within the classrooms and there is inconsistent implementation throughout the school. As a result, the meaning behind these programs and community partnerships such as Penny Harvest and community toy drives are not fully realized by students and families leading to uneven levels supports and services to enhance student learning through real world learning opportunities that foster social/emotional development.
- Refine communication and evaluation tools so that information is accessible to families to better guide them in understanding the learning needs of their children. (2.4)
  - o Although the principal consistently communicates with families around school wide expectations through weekly newsletters and frequent parent workshops, teacher communication with parents is inconsistent. The school does not have clear expectations around parent/teacher collaboration or dissemination of classroom information limiting opportunities for all parents to fully engage with the school to support students in their learning.
  - o The school used tools such as ARIS parent link, Acuity assessments tailored to student needs and Teachers College assessments to engage parents in an open exchange of information. Last year the school redesigned the school report card to better align to the school curriculum and targeted standards. However, there was limited parent input in this process and the school has yet to develop parent friendly tools to support families in using the report card to monitor and support learning limiting parents' ability to fully understand student performance as it relates to the school wide curriculum and standards.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. 154	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score				X
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<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	
<b>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.</b>				
<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	
<b>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.</b>				
<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	

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?				<b>X</b>			
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>