

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

PS/IS 208

Elementary Middle School 208

**74 – 30 Commonwealth Blvd
Queens
NY 11426**

Principal: James E. Philemy

Dates of review: January 23 – 24, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Lenon Murray

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Elementary-Middle School 208 is a combined elementary and intermediate school with 734 students from K through grade 8. The school population comprises 77% Black, 10% Hispanic, 3% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 96.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School staff delivers an engaging, standards-based curriculum including the Arts that integrates CCLS tasks and addresses key standards to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners to increase student achievement. (1.1)
 - The school has created detailed curricula that are aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and provide instructional coherence across all grades and subject areas. The pacing calendars and curriculum maps emphasize content and structure instruction to meet students' identified needs. The school has used non-fiction texts across all grades and increased the standard of writing required. The school has adapted literacy and math tasks from the Common Core library to meet their needs. Students have been writing persuasive essays that refer to texts to support their arguments. Art teachers use the Blueprint for the Arts consistently. Middle school students are engaged in dance, music, theatre and visual arts based on their aptitude and interests. This has led to improved quality in student work products by a minimum of 15% as measured by school rubrics aligned to State standards.
 - Teachers emphasize rigor and higher order thinking through continuous use of Depth of Knowledge criteria and Bloom's hierarchical taxonomy including instructional strategies around effective questioning to push students' ongoing critical analysis and problem solving skills across all grades and subjects. For example, students complete tasks in literacy and mathematics that require them to explain their work with supporting evidence. In the grade 3 literacy curriculum maps, students are required to write persuasive essays citing evidence for their arguments. In grade 8, students' math tasks require them to provide lucid explanations of how they arrived at their answers. This has led to increases in the volume and stamina exhibited by students as measured by teacher developed rubrics.
- Teachers demonstrate explicit beliefs that promote coherence and differentiation in teaching and learning across the curriculum to produce high quality student work. (1.2)
 - The school leadership and faculty believe in the education of the whole child and communicate those beliefs throughout the building. The social emotional attributes of children are nurtured along with their intellectual potential. In classrooms teachers set a calm tone and facilitate student discussions where students listen to each other and comment constructively. Students do many classroom assignments collaboratively in pairs or small groups. Students are encouraged to tutor each other when they are experiencing difficulty. Consequently, across the curriculum teaching practices such as collaborative group work incorporate activities that support both social-emotional and academic learning skills, resulting in improved student work products across all subject areas and grades.
 - A kindergarten inclusion class was learning about measurement in active ways. The two teachers and the paraprofessional worked seamlessly

together gently guiding the students around the room as they measured different objects and identified the relevant units of measurement. Each student's abilities were respected and they were encouraged to experience success at different levels of the activities. In a middle school grade 8 social studies class students were engaged in answering the question, "Whose America is it anyway?" utilizing different articles and media. These multiple sources described the current "Occupy Wall Street" movement and the 19th century Shay Rebellion. The teacher acted as the facilitator as different groups completed different assignments. These classroom strategies were typical of the careful planning and differentiated opportunities around the school that enable students to be challenged and engaged. This approach has led to improvement in assignments and student pride in their work as reflected in graded student work displayed in classrooms and on hallway bulletin boards.

- School leaders make specific organizational decisions that support the school's instructional goals including the Arts to more fully meet student learning needs. (1.3)
 - The school leadership has provided weekly meeting time for vertical planning as teachers meet in grade clusters of K-2, 3-5 and 6-8. This is in addition to regular grade level meetings and the informal meetings facilitated by common preps. Teachers involved in academic intervention and related service providers push in or pull out with their instruction based on students' individualized goals. Teachers trained in *Wilson* techniques, a program that supports phonics instruction, target specific students with disabilities and English language learners (ESL). This has led to improvement in student subgroups as measured by running records which capture achievements in reading skills.
 - The principal has carefully allocated funds to provide time for teachers to carefully plan and implement the CCLS tasks in ELA and math. These funds support the provision of substitute teachers to free teachers' time and pay some per-session rates to extend their work time. Consequently there has been a focus on improving writing and making computer tutorials available that extend learning both at home and at school. This has resulted in a higher quality of informational and creative writing as measured by school writing rubrics.
- School leaders use frequent observation of classroom teaching and the ongoing analysis of student outcomes to raise the level of teaching and advance professional growth including among newer teachers. (4.1)
 - Administrators visit classrooms regularly to observe and evaluate teacher instruction and analyze student work. They share a protocol based on the Danielson framework, a research based teacher classroom observation tool, to provide individualized feedback to teachers with next steps to immediately guide and align their teaching practices to articulated school instructional goals. The supervisors observe classrooms daily on an irregular schedule and provide written feedback by notes in mailboxes, emails and letters. Additionally, newer teachers have mentors assigned to them as well as the staff coach. Teachers meet at least every six weeks with the assistant principal who supervises their grade to refine the individual goals they have agreed upon with supervisors. Teachers are

encouraged to attend workshops of their choice provided by the network and national conferences sponsored by professional organizations. As a result, teachers are improving their planning and expertise as evidenced in lessons and teacher data reports.

- The school aligns assessments to the curriculum and actively uses data analysis to improve instructional decisions that promote student growth. (2.2)
 - Teams of teachers have created assessments to monitor the effectiveness of instruction across all subject areas. These assessments are aligned with unit tests and exit slips. Teachers administer daily quizzes that serve as pre-assessments before the mini-lesson is actually taught each morning. This provided data to inform adjustments to instructional decisions. Additionally teachers use individual conferring and small group strategy instruction to refine their adjustments. Teachers devise rubrics that set the standard for all writing and student projects and support rigor in the lessons. A third grade class doing a project on ancient Mesopotamia used a rubric to narrow the focus of student research and give definition to the writing. As a result, student learning has been accelerated across grades.
 - Consistent analysis of a variety of assessments including periodic assessments, classroom assessments and quality of student writing provides evidence of the strengths and challenges of English language learners and students with disabilities. As a result, teachers are able to provide additional intervention in solving work problems, using grammar appropriately in writing and answering essential questions with precision leading to improved student work products especially for targeted sub-groups.
- The school has a clear vision of their future evolution that is reflected in their focused, data-driven goals that have garnered strong community support to improve student outcomes. (3.1)
 - Specific goals to increase proficiency in English language arts and math for the bottom third of their students have been identified by the School Leadership Team (SLT) and articulated in the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP). The goals have a strong focus on students with disabilities who have struggled with concepts in math involving fractions. The school has recognized that student growth remains a focus and is working to increase rigor by including challenging CCLS tasks within the curriculum across all grades and content areas. The needs assessment is done at least three times during the school year and the school recognizes that students on grade level need increased engagement for college and career readiness. The School Leadership Team and the parent community develop school goals and share plans at parent meetings. Minutes are displayed on school bulletin boards and sent home in school newsletters periodically. The entire school community is supportive of these efforts which have led to improvement in student performance.

What the school needs to improve

- Share school wide data trends across all areas including social-emotional domains and sub-groups in order to track progress and support adjustments in closing the achievement gap for all learners. (2.1)
 - The school collects and analyzes data on students on a comprehensive scale to determine school level areas of strengths and needs. This data, although available, is not readily shared with teacher teams to track progress of subgroups. As a result, teachers lose sight of the overall trends at the school and opportunities to inform adjustments to instructional strategies in order to track student progress and contribute to school wide improvements for all students including sub-groups.
- Develop differentiated annual and interim learning goals for groups of students as well as at-risk students to support timely increases in their academic performance. (3.2)
 - Individual teachers and teams set goals for their students based on the data available from the daily quizzes, Acuity, Raz Kids and Reading Recovery. Summative data is also used as a baseline for the current year; however interim goals are not set. Most of the class and individual goals are based on the pacing calendar and the aims of the curriculum. Notwithstanding, the goals of struggling students are insufficiently differentiated to provide small successes in order to encourage progress toward next steps. As a result, these students take a longer time than their peers to achieve measurable goals.
- Deepen the level of inquiry-based collaboration for teacher teams to promote shared leadership and improve student learning. (4.2)
 - All teachers willingly participate in collaborative teams that share effective instructional strategies and analyze student work. They regularly recommend appropriate interventions to remediate and accelerate the learning of struggling students. However, this inquiry process varies from team to team across the school, with the grade three to five teacher teams being particularly strong. On these strong teams leadership roles are clearly established and the collaboration results in improved teacher practice for all members as evidenced in shared teaching strategies like Read Aloud and guided reading techniques. The leadership roles are often limited in teams that are less strong. This sometimes restricts efforts to improve student outcomes and expand leadership competencies.
- Further develop school structures to ensure that effective teacher practice and better use of organizational resources result in student mastery of current and evolving State standards. (5.1)
 - Administrators and teachers discuss curricular and instructional practices as a vital part of teacher team work and at faculty conferences. The instructional cabinet monitors teacher practice regularly and routinely. Teachers provide feedback to administration on the extent to which student learning needs are met. The process is ongoing and student work is being monitored. However, the feedback has not yet resulted in significant adjustments in instructional practices used in order to support coherence between what is taught and strategies used to accelerate student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: PS/IS 208	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