

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Susan B. Anthony**

**Middle School 238**

**88-15 182 Street  
Queens  
NY 11432**

**Principal: Peter Leddy**

**Dates of review: May 14 - 16, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Anita E. Saunders**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

Susan B. Anthony, IS 238 is a middle school with 1610 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 45% Black, 25% Hispanic, 1% White, and 25% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.49%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has established effective systems for monitoring instructional practices through the use of observation cycles and analysis of student work resulting in a clear focus on fostering professional growth. (4.1)
  - The new principal and assistant principals are observing all teachers in cycles, including those new to the school, with short, frequent visits using the Danielson rubric to determine the teacher's strengths and areas of need. Feedback is given through written emails and informal individual and group meetings where next steps are discussed. The leadership team checks data, student notebooks, work folders and portfolios, as well as, lesson plans to determine if the work for students is appropriately rigorous. Teachers are reflecting upon their practice and realize areas necessary for professional development. Some teachers are already visiting colleague's classrooms with a focused lens. As a result of the observation and feedback process as well as mini visitations, the principal and assistant principals are making informed decisions on professional development ,focusing in on planning, higher level questioning and thinking, as well as student engagement.
- Teams of teachers work effectively to analyze data for planning and adjusting instruction resulting in purposeful support for the needs of students. (2.2)
  - Teacher teams are creating rubrics and assessments that are based on the schools' newly created essential learning outcomes (ELO) and aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). These rubrics and assessments are used to analyze student work for monitoring progress. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade English language arts (ELA) team was analyzing pieces of writing, line by line, to determine the alignment with the CCLS and the rubric. The team then reflected on whether the instruction was appropriate and shared additional strategies for inferencing and compare/contrasting to analyze similes in poetry with the entire grade and vertical team.
  - Teams of teachers and individual teachers have also created uniform formative classroom assessments for the grade and department that enable them to examine student progress for lower and higher achieving subgroups, including students with disabilities (SWD) and ELLs. This enables teachers to analyze student strengths and needs and modify instruction to provide appropriate and challenging work. For example, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics team was working on the unit, Systems of Linear Equations, and analyzing student post-unit assessments for appropriate entry points for SWDs and ELLs. They also analyzed levels of cognitive complexity for mathematics to norm the task and determined the task was only of moderate complexity. Hence, the higher level students found the task easy and the entry point needed adjustment.
- The school goals are focused on student outcomes and aligned with a vision to accelerate learning for all students. (3.1)

- The instructional goals are clearly aligned with the needs of students. For example, the SWDs have been identified as a high need subgroup based on the NYS ELA and mathematics assessments. As a result, the goal for SWDs is to increase performance index from 78 to 140 in ELA and from 97 to 150 in mathematics on the NYS Report Card. Similarly, the ELL goal is to improve from 85 to 141 on the NYS Report Card in ELA. These goals are drafted in collaboration with key school constituents, reflected in the CEP and continuously reviewed at faculty, teacher team and School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings.
- The goals were decided upon after analysis of a variety of summative and formative assessments such as NY Start, Acuity, NY State Assessments, etc. classroom tests and observations. The new principal has required teachers to follow a uniform lesson content agenda format that is to be listed on the blackboard for every lesson, including instructional outcomes, standards, academic vocabulary, and assessment, to foster planning and strengthen instructional practices. Additionally the principal has made several organizational changes based on the outcomes of existing organizational practices including hiring an assistant principal (A.P.) for special education and an Absent Teacher Reserve (ATR) A.P. for literacy to accelerate student learning and increase achievement.
- Teachers are engaged in teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improving student learning and achievement.(4.2)
  - A majority of teachers are on a teacher team, organized by grade and subject area, and meet once a week. Teacher teams follow a predetermined, unified protocol where each member has a role that is rotated so that they have an opportunity to experience the various leadership positions. In addition, the protocol enables each teacher to express his/her idea, enabling voice in important decisions affecting instruction, curriculum and assessments. Furthermore, a vertical inquiry team consisting of teacher leaders from each department/grade meets once or twice a month to share work of the teacher teams ensuring curriculum alignment across grades and departments.
  - Teacher teams analyze samples of student work in relation to the CCLS curriculum maps, tasks and rubrics created to determine the appropriateness of the task, timing of the curriculum unit and level of rigor. Changes are then agreed upon by the team and again tested in the classrooms. Based on their findings, changes are made to improve the task or the rubric. Finally, instructional strategies that work are recommended for individual and/or specific groups of students. For example, all members of the team are teaching the same poetry unit with recommended strategies and observed the success with SWD and ELLs. These recommendations are then shared at the vertical inquiry team, resulting in improved teacher practice and student learning.
- Teacher teams use data to set differentiated goals for groups of students in need of additional support and extension resulting in accelerated learning. (3.2)

- Teacher teams use multiple sources of data to plan appropriate goals for students. Students are also given a uniform commercially published five week assessment in ELA and mathematics which teachers carefully analyze for skills needed to plan student goals. Each student in the school has a portfolio that lists the student's goal(s) in that subject area. For example, before teaching The Red Badge of Courage, student pre assessment revealed a need for additional work in drawing conclusions, inference and vocabulary. Lessons in vocabulary using the Smart Board and specific strategies for inferencing as a comprehension tool were taught. Students were engaged and working in groups, reading and discussing various chapters amongst themselves to understand the internal conflict of the main character. Eventually, they are to write an argumentative essay supporting their point of view. Hence, support and challenge were given to students to enhance their learning.
  
- The 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics teacher team has created their own tasks that are aligned with the CCLS and include multiple entry points for various groups of students based on the results of pre assessments. In one math class, students were solving systems of linear equation to analyze and solve a real life problem about flying from Miami to San Francisco, in groups. Students who were below grade level were encouraged to draw diagrams whenever possible to describe the word problem before writing equations, while advanced students were asked to solve a more advanced form of the problem including how wind speed changes the speed of a plane. Students were then asked to reflect upon the lesson with an exit slip to state which part was the most difficult to understand and why? Hence, appropriate work that is differentiated with various entry points is planned by the team so that students are challenged and accelerated, and truly engaged in their learning.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Increase the coherence of the curriculum across grades and consistently integrate CCLS aligned, rigorous tasks into instructional units to meet academic needs of all students. (1.1)
  - The school has recently begun a curriculum mapping process to align reading and writing to key standards and it has made some strides in designing literacy tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, particularly in argumentation. These learning experiences however, do not consistently call for students to engage in rigorous thinking and/or use higher-order skills to produce meaningful work. Although the curriculum maps reflect initial thought to engage a diverse group of learners through basic extension activities, learning tasks are not refined using student work so that the level of cognitive engagement can be assessed and increased. This results in missed opportunities to maximize students' engagement and leverage the curricular revision process for increased outcomes particularly for key student subgroups.
  
- Promote greater consistency across classrooms in designing a variety of learning experiences to meet differentiated student needs and promote cognitive engagement. (1.2)

- In some classrooms students are engaged in discussion and working in differentiated group activities planned to meet individual and subgroup needs that are reflective of real life experiences. Hence, a variety of work products are produced and nicely exhibited. However, in many classrooms students are quietly listening to teacher lectures and are not participating unless called upon. The level of questioning in these classrooms is reflective of Depth of Knowledge Level one (recall) and did not promote focused or deep thinking to cognitively engage students. In fact, the tasks did not match student needs and often students simply copy notes that are on the board or in specific paragraphs from an article read aloud in class. Therefore, there is an inconsistent theory of action around how students learn best. As a result, teaching practices do not consistently meet student needs.
- Increase the alignment of resource use, hiring practices and student programs to the school's instructional goals in order to increase student outcomes. (1.3)
  - The school's priority to build a strong administrative team is evidenced through the use of its allocation for four assistant principals, three deans, a full time programmer and four guidance counselors, in an effort to meet the needs of the student population. However, this current use of the budget does not include funding for instructional coaches and/or specialized teachers, limiting the school's ability offering staff job-embedded professional development and instructional support, resulting in missed opportunities for suitable academic intervention and enrichment services for students.
- Extend communication and collaboration with parents to increase their capacity in assisting their child's learning and track progress towards attaining goals and next learning steps. (2.4)
  - The school has made an effort to increase parent communications, including a Parent Saturday Academy for ELL parents to learn English, Spanish classes for the community, parent workshops, an electronic phone messaging system, and the school website with important information as well as parent feedback capabilities. However, at the present time, parents do not receive interim progress reports or any other communication and reporting tools that inform them of the specific next steps in their child's learning. As a result, parents are hindered from effectively assisting their children's learning at home.
- Develop systems to evaluate the success of teacher teams and leadership development so that professional growth of staff is consistently expanded. (5.4)
  - Although teacher teams have agendas and minutes, the school currently does not have a system to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams. As a result, the school is unable to determine whether teacher meetings are effective and meaningful in furthering student learning and in developing effective leadership ability.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: Susan B. Anthony IS 238</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		<b>X</b>		
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?		<b>X</b>		
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?		<b>X</b>		
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?		<b>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.**

<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			

<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>