

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Waterside Children's Studio School**

**27Q317**

**190 Beach 110 Street  
Rockaway Park,  
NY 11694**

**Principal: Dana Gerendasi**

**Dates of review: December 12, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Dr. Sherry Copeland**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Waterside Children's School, 27Q317 is an Elementary school with 424 students from Prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 37% Black, 42% Hispanic, 18% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 16.2% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school's systems support teacher development, resulting in improved student performance. 4.1
  - The principal has a formalized system for supporting teacher development through strategic observation cycles and analysis of student work and data, addressing the instructional goals of the school. Teachers' responses to a monthly survey identifies their professional needs, which are addressed by the school leaders through a multi pronged approach of monthly-differentiated professional development sessions, on- and off-site meetings by Teachers College, and collaborative team teaching coaching by a consulting company. Lead teachers are given responsibilities to run monthly meetings, along with network staff. A grade 2 teacher provides coaching support in select classes. As a result, the Progress Report shows a significant increase in the number of students performing at Levels 3 and 4 on State math assessments.
  - Using components of the Danielson framework, a research-based framework, the principal and assistant principal strategically provide timely and actionable feedback and clear expectations to staff. Based on daily walkthrough snapshots and observations a school designed feedback sheet supports the identification and implementation of best practices. A 'Feedback Binder' with documentation of staffs' pre-determined professional goals and evidence of their progress, serves as a guide for a mid-year check-in. As a result, the principal and her cabinet build the professional capacity of their staff.
- School leaders gather and analyze a wide range of relevant data to create a strong picture of the school's strengths and needs, and suitably adjust plans. 2.1
  - School leadership effectively collects and analyzes summative data including State assessments, periodic assessments, item skills analysis, on-demand assessments, attendance data, Online Occurrence Reporting System report (OORS), and behavior plans across grades to develop a clear picture of the strengths and needs of the school. By looking at an item skills analysis a need surfaced to focus on number sense and operations for grades 4 and 5, and inferencing in English language arts for grade 3. School leaders worked to leverage teacher practice to impact outcomes for students.
  - Across grades, uniform data binders of classroom goals, summative and classroom level data such as ACUITY and ARIS, guided reading groups, and individual student portfolios, enables the principal to gather and analyze classroom level data on individual students and relevant subgroups in order to make strategic instructional decisions. A section with prescriptive data for each student, including unit tests, observations, conference notes, writing rubrics and the targeted goals by student, enables teachers to track the progress of their students so that adjustments are made
- School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations to staff, families, and students, fostering high levels of professionalism and collaboration. 3.4

- A multimedia approach of weekly newsletters, observation feedback sheets, a school website, and school-wide initiatives such as data source binders, conferring toolkits, and Depth of Knowledge questioning techniques, are some measures that the principal uses to communicate her expectations to the staff. Professional development used to support the implementation of these expectations is provided on an ongoing basis, and teachers indicated that they are presently working on rigor and keeping students cognitively engaged. This consistent communication of high expectations, as evidenced in the school's Learning Environment Survey, showed 96% of the teachers agreed that school leaders let staff know what is expected of them, and 100% said that they are invited to play a meaningful role in setting goals and making important decisions in the school to create a culture of mutual accountability.
- 'Breakfast with Dana' sessions, held monthly, give the principal an opportunity to share expectations with parents so they are aware of the demands of the new standards, how they are being implemented in the classroom, and the nature and level of support that they can provide at home. Parents go on the school's website or a teacher's webpage to find different activities and instructional expectations, and participate in Family Friday's, so that they can engage and support their children's learning and triangulate learning to improve academic performance.
- The school's learning environment provides a high level of support to students within a culture of safety, respect and positive attitudes toward learning in order to develop their social/emotional skills and engage in academic learning. 1.4
  - Parents who feel strongly that the school is safe and encourages a climate of respect rated it 9+ on the Learning Environment Survey (LES). Parents state that school staff is always available to discuss concerns. The parent of a special needs child indicated that his child doesn't feel "different" because teachers work in small groups according to need, and other parents shared that their children are upset when there is no school. When asked what one thing they would change the majority of parents said, "extend the school to 8<sup>th</sup> grade." The use of results from the LES and OORS allows the school to target social emotional development through initiatives including a new attendance plan and a classroom behavior plan where students indicate awareness of their own behavior. These initiatives have resulted in a reduction in in-school incidents from 2009 as evidenced by the OORS report.
  - Students are involved in choosing their own academic goals and keep track of progress on postings on classroom bulletin boards. Student council representatives in grade 5 share their constituents concerns and feel their voices are heard as they describe using surveys and petitions to influence school-wide decisions, such as soap in the bathrooms. Consequently, students feel engaged in their learning and recognize their influence in school-wide decisions.
- The school's organizational decisions, including budget and use of staff, are well aligned to its instructional goals and result in increased student success. 1.3
  - Staff meet weekly as a grade and through a review of formative and summative data identify instructional foci to ensure engaging students in differentiated academic tasks to improve student work products. Kindergarten teachers chose questioning as the data shows that most of their students

could not answer Levels 2 or 3 questions. As a result, teachers use the Depth of Knowledge format to write higher order questions and a school-designed progress-monitoring checklist to support the implementation of the questions.

- The principal's successful writing and winning grant awards supplement the instructional programs and learning environment. One hundred thousand dollars for a computer lab incorporates technology as a viable teaching tool, and a new playground improves the overall quality of the school. Contracted consultants and vendors build the professional capacity of the staff, and the principal strategically uses internal human resources to support the professional needs of staff. Funding with cultural arts partners such as Together in Dance and New York City Ballet strengthens the school, improves attendance, and creates an interdisciplinary approach to meeting goals.
- A State aligned curriculum and teaching practices provide for multiple entry points for individuals and subgroups of learners, thus supporting all students in creating good work products and engaging in discussions. 1.1 1.2
  - Curriculum maps in grades pre-kindergarten to grade 5 are revamped to adapt the Teachers' College curriculum and Every Day Math program with the CCLS. Emphasis on key City standards in math and literacy, implementing the bundles from the Promising Practice Library, as well as writing their own tasks, is resulting in closing the achievement gap and promoting post-secondary readiness. Data from on-demand assessments, and authentic work samples guides staff in refining tasks and engaging students in their learning.
  - The workshop model is consistently evidenced across classrooms and includes mini lessons, small flexible groups, differentiated tasks, and opportunities for students to self-assess. An emphasis on good questioning, including accountable talk promotes student participation and meaningful work products.

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

- Extend goal setting and planning into a "theory of action" to accelerate student learning and social and emotional growth in order to narrow the achievement gap for sub-groups of students. 3.1
  - In the school's planning documents, Comprehensive Education Plan, and self evaluation form, the school identifies five school level grade-wide goals. However, including a focused and comprehensive theory of action with long-range, annual, and interim goals is not yet evident, thus minimizing the school's efforts on leveraging change and accelerating student learning.
  - The school has developed goals and action plans using a comprehensive formative and summative data set. Staff and administrators analyze instructional and organizational practices through team meetings, observations, intervisitations, and feedback forms. However, the school does not yet have a strong focus on strategic planning, thus hindering the narrowing of the achievement gap.

- Refine systems for on-going evaluation of the school's leadership development opportunities to support distributed leadership, monitor the effectiveness of teacher teams, and to build teacher leaders to support school decision making. 5.4
  - Teachers are asked to write yearly learning goals, one of which addresses leadership development. These goals are used to facilitate professional development throughout the year. However, few professional development offerings support leadership development. Additionally, while grade-level inquiry team members indicate that they take turns facilitating, the school leaders lead the core inquiry team. Thus, without additional support, building teacher capacity to take on leadership roles is minimized.
  - Grade-level teacher teams meet regularly and have representatives on the core inquiry team where they share their grade specific inquiry work. Although this is a form of evaluation of the effectiveness of these teams in terms of curricular and instructional expectations, a more formal practice of looking at their work in terms of impact on other areas of the school such as climate, or attendance, is not an embedded practice. Consequently, there are missed opportunities for teacher teams to impact school-wide practice.
- Expand teacher assessment practices to include varied use of on-going checks for understanding and provide immediate feedback on the learning needs of students in order to adjust instructional decisions. 2.2
  - Teachers consistently assess understanding at the end of instructional units. However, they do not consistently check for understanding at the end of a lesson, thus missing opportunities to collect immediate feedback in order to make timely adjustments to instruction to meet the needs of all students.
  - The school has implemented a structure for teachers to supplement summative data with formative data to determine if individual students are making progress. However, examining data on student subgroups is not embedded as a consistent practice in the school. As a result, it is difficult to track progress and adjust instruction to maximize learning for special populations.
- Refine school-wide grading policies and practices to align with report cards and other forms of data summaries that capture data about student mastery in order to inform curricular, instructional and organizational decisions. 2.3
  - The school has a formalized system of informing students and parents about trends in performance and progress towards the standards. However, the varied tools that measure student performance do not provide consistent information on grading policies and practices. As a result, parents, students, and staff are not always aware of the accurate meaning of the data, precluding the school from easily leveraging this data to inform curricular and instructional decisions.
  - The school uses data tools to monitor student performance and trends to make curricular and instructional decisions. However, the emphasis has been on looking at trends school-wide and across grades rather than across specific subgroups such as economically disadvantaged boys, resulting in fewer targeted school level decisions.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: Waterside Children's Studio School</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	

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

<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>
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