

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**WATERSIDE SCHOOL FOR LEADERSHIP**

**Middle school Q318**

**190 BEACH 110 STREET  
ROCKAWAY PARK  
NY 11694**

**Principal: LINDA MUNRO**

**Dates of review: November 20, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

WATERSIDE SCHOOL FOR LEADERSHIP is a middle school with 133 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 53% Black, 29% Hispanic, 14% White, 1% Asian, and 3% American Indian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 92.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and faculty provide exemplary reciprocal conversations with students and their families regarding student progress that result in a keen understanding of student performance and next steps for improvement. (2.4)
  - o Highly detailed progress reports, student goal sheets, monthly grade curriculum newsletters, and individualized scholar action plans provide opportunities for reciprocal discussions about the progress students make in school. Collectively, the reports provide clear information about what students are learning, student goals, and their progress towards meeting them, including student performance towards the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks, next steps and attendance. Parents say that they have ample opportunities to discuss the progress of their children, and are kept well informed as to the school's expectations through email, School Messenger, frequent assembly programs, and the school's website.
  - o A student commented, "They provide us with the right level of comfort. They make sure we are OK." ARIS, used to inform students and their families about student performance in a timely way, provides this comfort. Parents and students are adept at accessing ARIS Parent Link, and use the information to email teachers, and set parent teacher conferences to engage in meaningful discussions about progress, thus resulting in excellent levels of support at home for improving student outcomes.
- Teacher teams are diligent in their engagement of collaborative inquiry that results in improved emphasis on student learning and distributed leadership. (4.2)
  - o Teacher teams are extremely skillful as they collect and analyze a wide range of relevant data, plan collaboratively, and develop assessments that embed the CCLS with the goal of accelerating student growth. The grade 6 team's review of the previous year's English language arts and math data, as well as results from pre-assessments, included an analysis of each question. This resulted in the identification of students' performance on specific questions relative to patterns and trends. Consequently, the team developed lessons that focus on strategies to improve skills such as inferences, and drawing conclusions. Additionally, students were re-configured into groups based on Renzulli formative data, and students who continue to struggle in English language arts and math attend extended day instructional programs. As a result, teachers comment that students are taking increased ownership of their work and an improvement in work habits is reflected on all grade levels.
  - o Teachers facilitate team meetings at grade level, during weekly data talks meetings and share their team's work as members on the principal's cabinet. Teachers collaborate during regularly scheduled team meetings and through an on-line program share minutes, best practices, and guide how subject area teachers' best implement the school's Big 3 Goals in English language arts and math into the subject areas. Consequently, staff is able to collectively influence significant decisions that promote student achievement in areas such as informational text, and number sense.

- The school effectively aligns curricula to State standards, integrates the CCLS tasks, and makes informed decisions that promote college readiness for a variety of learners in all grades. (1.1)
  - o Curriculum maps drive the instructional program as they dictate what is taught, how it is taught, and how often. The CCLS are embedded into the curriculum, and maps are revised regularly at team meetings to ensure effectiveness, such as adequate rigor. Based on the analysis of the previous year's data, the maps were adjusted this summer to include increased emphasis on informational text and number sense. Literacy tasks developed by the school are incorporated into curriculum maps for all grades. Math tasks taken from bundles and adjusted by the school, reflects increased rigor and alignment to the CCLS. As a result, there is a common focus and understanding regarding instruction by promoting rigor and postsecondary readiness in all classes across the school in order to close the achievement gap.
  - o The leadership and teachers across all grades and subjects comment that questioning is a major focus for the school, and staff use Depth of Knowledge to promote critical thinking. In a grade 7 English language arts class, students engage in a high-level conversation about author's purpose. Students asked clarifying questions of their peers that pushed the groups' thinking. As a result, all students were successful in sharing their debate aligned with the CCLS, were encouraged to ask high-level questions, and received thoughtful responses from a variety of learners.
- The principal's strategic use of resources results in optimal opportunities for scholars to benefit from stimulating activities that promote academic success. (1.3)
  - o The principal uses a conservative budget to purchase quality resources, such as provocative books that support literature circles and the school's book clubs. Technology tools used throughout the day in all content areas and during the 37.5 extended day program, support students in all content areas. A literacy consultant provides ongoing professional development for improving teachers' practice thus promoting improved student outcomes. An exemplary art program carefully aligned to the 'Big 3 Goals' of the school includes interdisciplinary projects that reflect the CCLS. Art activities, relative to key math concepts, involve students in creating artistic landscape designs, a "fractioning tree", and folded paper that reinforces parallel, and intersecting lines. As a result, there is improved math performance, specifically in the area of algebraic expressions and equations.
  - o Based on slippage of Level 3 and 4 student performance on last year's State tests, the principal reduced class size in grade 8. For the 37.5 extended day program, staff review data obtained from item skills analysis to group students and effectively adjusted the program. A specialized high school preparation course offered on four days after school and on Saturdays supports the needs of accelerated students. Additionally, teachers have multiple opportunities to meet weekly on their grade, and in subject area to engage in the analysis of data, and identify instructional strategies that support the learning needs of all learners. Consequently, the school fosters high levels of accountability. One grade 8 student beamed, after receiving a perfect score on his math exam, that his teacher explained it "the easiest way for me to remember."
- Teachers' dedicated analysis of data leads to the sufficient alignment of assessments and rubrics to the curriculum providing actionable feedback regarding the effectiveness of their decisions. (2.2)

- o During weekly team meetings, grade 7 teachers create assessments aligned with the curriculum to identify students on the cusp, to support them from either slipping back or help them in moving up to the next performance level. Based on their noticings, without adequate intervention about 50% of their students were in jeopardy of declining a level. Enhanced extended day opportunities now include adjusted curriculum maps with increased periods of math and literacy instruction aligned to the CCLS with timely feedback around student performance. As a result, staff is able to identify areas of weaknesses, and regularly adjust key components of their instruction.
- o Teacher teams use binders to assemble available data including Acuity, benchmark assessments, exit slips, journals, and item skills analysis that are referenced to track student progress, including subgroups, and the lowest third. This results in ongoing support for students in all content areas by faculty dedicated to improving students' performance.
- The principal has effective strategies that support the observation of teachers and provide robust feedback that result in a comprehensive view of instructional practice and next steps. (4.1)
  - o The principal uses formal, informal, and short frequent observations to support teacher development. New teachers receive mentor support and all teachers benefit from collegial observation of their practice, by leadership, teacher peers, and/or the Children First Network. The principal tracks the observations of teachers on an Excel spreadsheet to ensure that everyone is observed, and maintains a keen eye towards teachers' demonstrating improved questioning as an instructional strategy. As a result, the goals of the school are sufficiently monitored and teachers improve their practice.
  - o Proceeding all observations, teachers receive immediate feedback from the principal via email, letters or face-to-face meetings, that align to a research-based framework and sufficiently captures next steps. In the observation of a new teacher, the principal noted a teacher's successful implementation of the use of merit tickets to encourage reluctant learners to participate in the lesson, a previously recommended next step. Consequently, teaching practices that positively improve the performance of students is strengthening across the school.

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

- Extend the implementation of differentiated strategies in order to enable learners to have multiple entry points and extensions into the curricula. (1.2)
  - o Classrooms across the school reflect teaching strategies and questioning that are differentiated and respond to the learning needs of a variety of learners, as noted in the grade 7 Integrated Co-Teaching math class. However, not all classrooms reflect differentiated learning tasks to allow all learners multiple entry points, supports, and extensions into the curricula. As a result, activities that sufficiently challenge accelerated students to achieve at higher levels are not yet evidenced across the school.
  - o Most teachers plan exciting and challenging lessons, and long-term projects for students, such as the study of a variety of text structures in the grade 8 English language arts class. However, there are a still some classrooms where lessons result in general levels of participation. Consequently, consistent instruction

where students challenge one another and include high level of thinking is not yet in place school wide, therefore missing the opportunity to fully meet a goal of the school.

- Broaden the development of long-range plans to include all constituents in order to deepen the support that the community has for the school. (3.1)
  - The school's rationale for their short list of clear and focused goals is linked directly to a specific data source that is shared both verbally and as noted in action plans. All constituents speak well of the school, and efforts to accelerate student learning. However, parents have not sufficiently been involved in the development of long-range plans. As a result, the school cannot be sure if all constituents take complete ownership of the goals or can articulate the link between accelerating student learning and social-emotional growth.
  - The school engages in numerous home school activities that enable effective sharing in goal setting and action plans. However, while the school has a student council, students have not yet taken part in the long-range planning at the school level precluding a more expansive support regarding the data-informed path to accelerate student learning.
- Formalize professional development plans in a way that delineates whole school and differentiated support for teachers in order to improve their practice. (4.3)
  - Waterside School for Leadership is a small school, and the principal can identify the professional learning needs of the school at large as well as the individual requirements of her staff. Training is ongoing, differentiated, and facilitated by the literacy consultant, teacher experts, the guidance counselor, principal and the CFN. However, while a "list" of professional development exists to reflect professional training opportunities, presently, there is no formal plan. Absent a formal professional development plan diminishes the school's ability to ensure that the leadership development of teachers is continuously addressed and a consistent approach for professional growth of staff is maintained.
- Refine systems to regularly evaluate the school's leadership development opportunities in order to deepen the development of future leaders. (5.4)
  - Teacher teams are extremely collaborative and their work on all three grades using the analysis of summative and formative assessment data results in instructional adjustments at the team and classroom level. Teachers use an on-line computer software program to store relevant team data, such as minutes, assessments, research articles, and effective instructional strategies. However, the school has not developed a school-wide system to use quantifiable student results to measure the success of its on-line system. This limits their ability to confirm the exact impact the program is having on student learning.
  - Although the practice of distributive leadership allows staff members to be selected as team facilitators and attend the principal's cabinet, this process is not yet sufficiently refined. Therefore, this precludes the school from building capacity of future leaders who can impact the work of teacher teams' inter- and intra-grade.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: <b>WATERSIDE SCHOOL FOR LEADERSHIP</b>	UD	D	P	WD
<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>	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?			<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>	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?			<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>	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?			<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>
-----------	-----------------------	----------	-------------------	----------	-------------------	-----------	-----------------------