

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

The Courtlandt School
Elementary School 001
335 East 152nd Street
Bronx
NY 10451

Principal: Jorge Perdomo

Dates of review: May 15 – 16, 2012

Reviewer: Yolanda Torres

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Courtlandt School is an elementary school with 681 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 22% Black, 75% Hispanic, 1% White, American Indian 1% and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 19% 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 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school-wide use of technology as an instructional and assessment tool provides staff, students, and families, with valuable information leading to student instructional progress. (1.3)
 - School leaders have made a conscientious and concerted effort in ensuring that every student has the opportunity of exposure to technology such as Smart boards, computers, laptops in classrooms and school library, flip cameras, e-books, online assessments and data results. Thus, learning is an interactive process where students' work products align to 21st century educational expectations. Additionally, this experience has increased students' ability to access assessment results at home. In company of their parents, students engage in meaningful conversations about their progress aligned to standardized tests and next steps in their learning resulting in goal attainment and the production of standards-based student work. Students bring this knowledge back to the classroom to hold conversations with teachers on what they have learned about their academic progress.
 - All teachers engage in weekly common meeting times for inquiry and planning across grades and content areas. Teachers participate in lab site demonstrations, which they immediately replicate with a small cohort of students as the staff developer models the lesson resulting in improved teaching practices and student engagement in higher order tasks. This model is acknowledged by the network as an exemplary practice, and has been adopted as an additional professional development support and resource.
- Teams of teachers work collaboratively in the analysis of student work and provide each other with warm and cool feedback resulting in instructional adjustments at the classroom level. (2.2)
 - Teams of teachers look at argumentative and persuasive pieces of writing across grades. As they analyze student work, they share low inference insights that contribute to granular and focused conversations on next steps needed to support individual student's learning. Teachers use the feedback to adjust their planning and teaching, thus effectively enhancing students' performance.
 - School leaders, in conjunction with teachers, have streamlined the process of data analysis and tracking of student progress by holding vertical articulation meetings. Thus, they are able to identify school-wide trends, decide on specific strategies that all teachers consistently use such as individual conferrals, strategy-driven small group interventions, and teacher-initiated instructional clubs. As teachers become acquainted with the varied strategies, they design their own programs and customize their lessons to support their students before, during, and after school leading to focused instructional practices adjusted to the general academic needs of their students.
- School leaders conduct frequent classroom visitations and provide teachers with timely, actionable feedback as evidenced by professional growth and continuous teacher self-reflection. (4.1)

- Frequent classroom observations provide school leaders and teachers with the opportunity to rigorously dialogue on the lesson, its outcomes, and next steps for professional improvement. School leaders frequently discuss their observations at cabinet meetings to ensure that the feedback provided to teachers is consistent and congruent to the expectations set forth in their school-wide professional development plan. Additionally, to support this work, each teacher's individualized professional development plan includes goals to which they are held accountable by school leaders and are referenced during their one-on-one sessions in order to ensure that the feedback provided and adjustments made to their practice are in sync with the outlined expectations. School leaders have also empowered teachers to reflect on administrators' feedback resulting in mutual engagement in reciprocal conversations contributing to the instructional and professional growth for staff and administrators.
- Teacher professional development support is at the core of the school-wide teacher effectiveness plan. School leaders conduct the triangulation of data through a sophisticated online program that aligns with teacher effectiveness and standardized testing. As they meet with every teacher to discuss tenure expectations and quality teaching vis-à-vis effective teaching, teachers write reflective pieces on how this discussion process helps them understand what effective teaching entails and its short- and long-term effect on student achievement. This process results in a transparent conversation with data-driven evidence that gears teachers towards self-improvement.
- All teachers engage in structured collaborative weekly team meetings where they consistently analyze and discuss data and student work to understand how to meet the needs of targeted cohorts of students. (4.2)
 - All teachers, inclusive of coaches, engage in the non-negotiable school-wide commitment of analyzing data and student work on a weekly basis to make informed decisions and changes in practice that address the needs of their students. As teachers assess and discuss student work via the inquiry approach, they provide each other with suggested practices and advice on possible instructional choices that can positively impact the academic progress of specific subgroups of students such as English language learners and students with disabilities. Teachers make decisions around the flexible re-grouping of students based on their findings and agreed-upon next steps to ensure granular instructional focus on student academic performance. In addition, teachers are empowered to perform inter-visitations, irrespective of years of experience, for further support and feedback on lesson and/or strategy delivery. This practice leads to a more cohesive sense of teamwork and evidence of distributive leadership.
- The school provides a safe learning environment in support of students' academic and social emotional needs for their overall academic success. (1.4)
 - The school's commitment to cultivate a culture of "*Health, Happiness, and Peace*" is evident in its variety of structures and programs. *Brain Education*, *Project EXSEL*, and *Teaching Children to Care*, address the social/emotional needs of all students and are supportive of a learning environment that contributes to improved student self-esteem, positive behaviors, and ultimately, increased academic performance. The embedding of selected programs into the school culture allows for a decrease of behavior issues and an increase in the

levels of intervention, leading to a positive tone that permeates from classroom to classroom.

- Students have opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities and clubs before, during, and after school, helping them to excel and/or improve in various activities. Engaging in sports, dance competitions, hands-on technical tasks, school talk show, tutoring, and cultural trips, students' learning is enriched. They then have opportunities to reflect upon and share experiences through their writing accompanied by rubrics that evidences the effort, growth, increased writing volume, and improved instructional outcomes of students. This work is proudly displayed in hallways.
- School leaders provide teachers with opportunities to lead within their professional collaborations in order to build capacity and strong relationships in support of leadership development. (5.4)
 - Vertical and horizontal planning take place on a regular basis and provides teachers and service providers with the opportunity to grow professionally with each other as they focus in on students' instructional needs. Evaluating the ongoing meetings with colleagues is resulting in the building of stronger teamwork, structured lessons aligned to the standards, and professional growth, contributing to in-depth student accountability.
 - The principal's statement announcing, "everyone is expected to be a leader" is evident in the quality of work produced across classrooms and how teachers build on and support each other at their frequent meetings and agreed-upon inter-visitations. Teachers have developed strong relationships within their teams to the extent where the support becomes individualized, and granular trainings lead to teacher/team growth and success. This process contributes to teacher professional growth with strong possibilities of stepping up to future leadership roles for consistent instructional development and lesson delivery, reflective of ongoing teacher maturity and improved student performance.

What the school needs to improve

- Build on the alignment of the curricula and the integration of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks and delve deeper into purposeful, rigorous habits in order to close the achievement gap. (1.1)
 - School leaders took into account the feedback from the previous Quality Review to "initiate, implement, and institutionalize" practices in order to improve the quality of instruction school-wide. The integration of the CCLS has created a paradigm shift where student ownership is beginning to emerge. While the purposeful decisions are evident, these have yet to impact student learning across classrooms on a consistent basis.
 - In light of the demands of the Common Core, teachers are empowered to make decisions on sustainable practices that set conditions for student independent learning. The concept of "flipping the classroom" is at its early stage of implementation where teachers present students with performance tasks that are open-ended to challenge students' thinking. This collaboration engages teachers and students to problem solve and learn together. However, this concept is at

the developing stage, for its impact is not consistent where the high demands of rigor are evident from student-to-student and from classroom-to-classroom.

- Refine the questioning and teaching strategies to meet the differentiated needs of relevant subgroups of students. (1.2)
 - The school-wide focus on the conferral process and Depth of Knowledge (DoK) through nonfiction small groups has provided both teachers and students with opportunities to have meaningful conversations leading students to make connections to real world situations. Although there is evidence of ‘scaffolded’ teaching and learning, there is inconsistency in the instructional approach to meet the differentiated needs of subgroups of students, with a keen eye towards students with disabilities, and provide them with appropriate strategies at their multiple entry points. Thus, inconsistent cognitive engagement hinders all students from full mastery and ownership of their learning.
 - School leaders facilitate sessions on questioning techniques to provide teachers with a model of how to ask higher order questions and learn to listen to students for understanding. School leaders’ and faculty’s commitment to grow as a community of learners is evidenced by reading a professional book with subsequent conversations on questioning techniques as they learn together. Teachers are beginning to ask higher order questions to engage students in persuasive and/or argumentative conversations. However, there are still uneven levels of student thinking and participation as evidenced by limited academic discourse and consistent high level dialogue during ‘turn-and-talks’ and individual conferrals between students and teachers.
- Expand the setting of measurable learning goals to leverage change in classroom practice and accelerate student learning across all content areas. (3.2)
 - Teachers set data-driven goals for student subgroups “to fix something you are struggling with” as one student eloquently stated. Some students walk around with goals written on cards so they can “look at them and try to achieve them.” There is evidence of school-wide effort in devising ways for students to fully achieve their goals. However, an inconsistency in student understanding of differentiated learning goals in each of their content area subjects limits developing an independent mastery of their learning.
- Ensure that the structures in place continue to build alignment and coherence between what is taught and how it is taught, for the improvement of student performance. (5.1)
 - School leaders, in collaboration with teachers, make informed decisions based on student needs. As they provide feedback to teachers, systems and structures are discussed for increased coherence. Teacher planning time is another venue to evaluate and revise decisions made on curricula, instruction, and use of resources for streamlining purposes. Although the alignment and coherence between the instruction and the outcomes of the lessons are evident in some classrooms, structures are not in place to lead to consistency throughout, thereby resulting in uneven levels of student achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: The Courtlandt School	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
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