

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**P.S. X014 Senator John Calandra  
Elementary school X014**

**3041 BRUCKNER BOULEVARD  
BRONX  
NY 10461**

**Principal: Ira Schulman**

**Dates of review: October 14, 2011  
Lead Reviewer: Deena Abu-Lughod**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S. X014 Senator John Calandra is an Elementary school with 618 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 57% Hispanic, 36% White, 2% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 93%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The collaboratively constructed vision of future development prioritizes a set of data-informed goals that drive efforts to accelerate student learning. (3.1)
  - o The principal engages teachers and parents in a thorough evaluation of existing practices and aspirations. This qualitative review, along with the scrutiny of performance, behavioral and attendance data, results in the articulation of a vision that links trust and professional development to improved teacher practice and curricula and connects the roles and actions of leaders, teachers and parents, and resources to student achievement. This collaborative process leads to higher collective accountability for outcomes as expressed by both parents and teachers who are enthusiastic about the school's new direction. Complementing the plans for academic achievement are goals related to social-emotional growth and targeted plans for students in the school's lowest third as well as a new program called Quest for the most advanced students. The school achieved its prior year's goals supported by parent-run fundraisers, to provide technology and large libraries to all classrooms, and reopened the school library which has increased the volume of reading, and is now well-focused on enhancing the quality of curriculum and instruction.
- The principal has cultivated a safe and respectful environment where all constituents contribute actively to the positive, vibrant learning community. (1.4)
  - o The new principal's open door policy and visibility is highly valued by parents and teachers, who now feel valued and eager to take on leadership roles in the school's many new committees. Learning Environment Survey results indicate 50 point increases in the percent of teachers who feel invited to play meaningful roles in the school, and feel that the school has a clear vision, celebrates success and runs smoothly. The Parent Teacher Association is revitalized, counting 70 parents among the volunteers, and supporting a wide array of dances and spirit-raising events. As a result, both teacher and student attendance has improved, and all constituents are focused on fostering student growth.
  - o Students from every classroom elect officers who participate in the student government to ensure their voice is heard in school-wide decisions. They voted on the school's mascot, which one student proudly said made their school unique amongst elementary schools. Wolf Pack Pride points, and curricula like Dance4Peace and Second Step foster social-emotional growth, providing students with conflict resolution strategies and incentives for doing the right thing. Teachers know their students very well and are supported by the guidance counselor in providing classroom-based support strategies. These practices have contributed to the reduction by half of incidents involving negative behavior in comparison to this time last year.
- The principal strategically aligns key resources to support attainment of school goals in ways that build collective accountability for student success. (1.3)
  - o The principal fosters collaboration by scheduling at least four weekly opportunities for teachers to meet. During the school day, grade level teams have up to four common prep periods and they use this time effectively to examine results from common assessments and calibrate their understandings of

- quality, and to craft tasks and rubrics aligned to the new standards. In addition, the school-based option provides a structure for teachers who serve as content specialists on their grade to meet in cross-grade teams, which teachers state is the "most impactful" because it enables them to align curricula vertically, generate a common language of instruction and build mutual accountability for progress across grades and subject areas.
- o The leadership makes purposeful staffing decisions to ensure that students' needs are met. For example, the staff committee actively recruited a teacher with demonstrated success in moving students to serve in Grade 5, where students had made little growth last year. They also decided to hire a long-term substitute teacher and former paraprofessional from the school because they had the knowledge and skills expected of teachers at the school. Classroom visits showed all three teachers to be valuable additions to the staff. A very effective teacher was moved from a general education assignment to serve students in a self contained class where students engaged in the same tasks as their peers in less restrictive environments and were able to master the learning objective with her support. All former out-of-classroom teachers now have classroom assignments, which lowers the student-teacher ratio and builds greater accountability for outcomes. The time of three consultants is closely monitored and targeted to ensure new teachers, and those supporting the highest needs students received focused, close-to-the-classroom coaching. As a result, instruction across the school is improving.
  - Teachers make good use of assessment data to guide instructional decisions that support students to attain higher levels of achievement. (2.2)
    - o Teacher teams align assessments to the curricular goals that are indicated in the scope and sequence they use. Rubrics are developed for each literacy unit, and teachers have even re-scored work after calibrating their understanding so they can better evaluate their own practice in relation to student outcomes. In grade level meetings, they examine both written assignments in literacy and itemized results from the mathematics program, customized Acuity assessments and the DRA to identify grade-level trends and the needs of particular groups of students. This process enables them to monitor results and to provide small group assignments and homework matched to identified needs to set students on a path towards mastery. Short post-assessments reveal this process is producing positive results.
  - Differentiated professional development opportunities offer teachers pathways to excellence and leadership so they can effectively support student learning. (4.3)
    - o Professional development is a priority and designed to foster teacher leadership while building the capacity of all staff in the school's priority areas. On each grade, one teacher serves as the point person for each subject area and attends content-focused trainings, such as those offered at Teachers College for literacy, and Teaching American History for social studies, and then turnkey to colleagues which encourages leadership and professionalism. An educational assistant participates in a master teacher program while a highly experienced teacher is slated for a coaching program. While the school develops individual plans by matching teachers' self-reported needs with specific supports, it works on school-wide goals collectively. For example, last year's focus on aligning instructional aims to the lesson and accountable talk was evident in nearly all classrooms, and teacher team meetings revealed how all teachers are now engaged in implementing the common core standards. This is elevating the quality of

teaching schoolwide, and teachers state that they are noticing considerable improvement in the quality of student writing and conversation.

## What the school needs to improve

- Refine the development of classroom tasks to ensure that these consistently engage all students in cognitively challenging, academically rigorous activities. (1.1)
  - o The principal has introduced the Teachers College literacy curriculum, which provides a coherent framework for reading and writing instruction. The school relies on the program's identification of priorities, and there are plans for integrating tasks from the Common Core. Vocabulary was selected as a schoolwide priority, based on last year's inquiry work and an analysis of state test results but the focus was not yet evident across all classrooms. In mathematics, teachers are focusing on aspects of Everyday Mathematics that align to the citywide focus standards. Faculty is aware of Hess's depth of knowledge framework as a way of increasing the rigor of their questions, and attempt in some classes to use the language of this framework in setting lesson aims. However, tasks in general involved little problem solving or real-life applications, and in one case, a teacher considered that higher order thinking is reserved for students at higher performance levels. Some opportunities to engage students in discussions to discover themes through analysis were missed as students in one class engaged in "seek and find" activities using graphic organizers.
- Expand the repertoire of instructional practices to promote consistent opportunities for meaningful discussion and organized peer interaction to foster greater independence. (1.2)
  - o Lessons across the school demonstrate the school's commitment to the workshop model, and teachers use data well to discern and address students' particular learning needs in small groups and conferencing. However, students have limited options for accessing the curricula or for demonstrating attainment of learning goals in multiple ways. Routines to enable students to work productively in small groups or independently were not present in all classrooms. For example, in one classroom, a group did nothing while awaiting the arrival of the push in teacher, thus losing valuable instructional time and in another, several students were unable to explain why they were given independent reading time. Partner talk is used frequently, but there is variation across classrooms in the quality of questions and there is little evidence of planning for student discussion, either in small groups or as a class. The capacity of students to engage in small group work productively is hindered by the absence of structures and expectations of outcomes, which is evident in the variation in the quality of student work across classrooms.
- Regularize the observation schedule to ensure teachers receive timely feedback to accelerate their improvement so that their pedagogy impacts positively on student performance. (4.1)
  - o School leaders visit classrooms almost daily to obtain information that informs the ongoing professional development plans, and provides evidence to determine whether school-wide goals relative to instructional practice are being achieved. However, last year all teachers did not receive formal observations. The school has just recently introduced a research-based framework and initiated the first cycle of feedback using its criteria, starting with some of the more experienced teachers. Teachers are still learning about the expectations embodied in that rubric and are developing their understanding of its implications. As a result,

teachers lack useful information about where their own practice lies in relation to the expectations framed in the rubric and knowledge about their precise next steps, which limits their potential to impact student growth.

- Ensure the process of aggregating key progress indicators at the classroom, grade and subgroup level leads to accessible data to identify gaps and guarantee extension of the highest leverage practices. (2.3)
  - o Teachers use tools to track progress of individual students in mathematics and literacy. However, at the school level, tools for aggregating this information to identify patterns and trends are cumbersome, and there are no electronic tools to facilitate disaggregation so that the progress of different subgroups can be monitored and compared. Similarly, there is no system for aggregating this information in relation to specific achievement targets or for comparing outcomes from year to year. As a result, it is difficult to connect outcomes to specific practices or curricular choices to make more strategic modifications to curriculum.
  - o Although teachers are now calibrating their grading of written work, there are no common policies related to classroom grades. In the absence of such agreement and lacking common assessments in all subject areas, classroom grades do not serve as reliable indicators of student performance, thus limiting opportunities to analyze student strengths and weaknesses at the school level.
- Ensure that the school goals include clear and measurable benchmarks to monitor progress and connect student growth to classroom practice to better inform adjustments over time. (3.3)
  - o School planning is well informed by the analysis of student performance, the quality of teaching and the changes required by the new standards. Although most teachers have good systems for monitoring individual student progress, the school does not set explicit achievement goals or interim benchmarks on the school, grade or subgroup level to ascertain whether the pace of progress is on track, where the pockets of excellence exist, and what kinds of outcomes should trigger adjustments in plans during the year.
  - o Teachers in grades 3-5 send home a Week in Review progress report with information related to the child's academics, homework and behavior. However, teachers do not share uniform criteria for grading and not all teachers provide useful comments, which, according to some parents, leads to lack of clarity as to next steps for learning.. Additionally, teachers provide written feedback to students, but in many cases, comments are generic thus limiting students' opportunities to accelerate towards mastery.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

|   |    |   |   |    |
|---|----|---|---|----|
| School name: P.S. X014 Senator John Calandra  | UD | D | P | WD |
| Overall QR Score  |    | X |   |    |
| <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?   |    | 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  |
| <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?   |    |   | 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 |    |
| <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?  |    |   |   | 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**

|           |                       |          |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <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> |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|