

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. X017
K-8 school X017

778 FOREST AVENUE
BRONX
NY 10456

Principal: ROBIN COHEN

Dates of review: January 18 - 20, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Donna Dimino

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. X017 is a K-8 school with 331 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 41% Black, 54% Hispanic, 2% White, 1% Asian students and 2% other students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 85% of the students enrolled and girls account for 15%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 86.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's strong culture of mutual trust and respect assures that students' academic and social-emotional needs are highly supported leading to better outcomes for future success. (1.4)
 - o The entire school community focuses on social-emotional values. A highly interwoven system of positive behavior programmatic supports including Three Bee's, Emotional Literacy and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention effectively serve to reinforce positive choices and self-regulation. The school is vigilant and responsive in how these are implemented in maintaining a strong culture for learning for all students. Positive Behavior rewards have been expanded to the bus in the form of Transportation Bucks since data revealed a spike in incidents in that location. When the school roster indicated an increase in middle school females, school leaders strategically redeployed and partially funded a qualified, female staff member to join the school's youth development team this year, assuring that all students are known and staff are able to respond to students' needs efficiently and effectively. As a result, the school maintains an overwhelming climate of calm and a culture of respect in classrooms and throughout the building. This has led to more than a 60% reduction in high-level incidents in the past year and enabled 69% of graduating eighth graders to matriculate to a general education high school.
- The principal's coherent vision for accelerated student learning led to her creating a list of focused goals which is supported by the entire school community. (3.1)
 - o The school works robustly to develop a comprehensive vision for improving student learning outcomes based on the leadership's passion to move all students along a continuum of less restrictive environments and supports. Diligence in setting focused goals from school-wide documents, analysis of a range of formative assessments and diagnostics, knowledge of students' disability needs, and input from staff, student and parent surveys, have led to a concise set of targets that drive organizational and instructional decision-making and that all staff work to support. The Cabinet and School Leadership Team, including teachers, pupil support staff and parents, developed focused goals for gains in mathematics and English language arts that dovetail with foci in improved instructional planning and practice. These are further informed by students' Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and an additional target has been set for overall gains in IEP goal mastery. These goals are at the core of all formal meetings, as well as informal meetings and activities between and amongst stakeholders on a daily basis so that involvement by all school community members is integral to the fabric of the organization. School leadership's open door policy, in conjunction with formal communiqués and feedback structures such as classroom walkthroughs and family communication notebooks, assures buy-in by all members. Teachers, students and parents alike know targets needed for improved student outcomes leading to less restrictive supports and potential mainstreaming to a general education setting as appropriate. As a result, there are articulated foci across the organization, as expressed during teacher team, parent and student meetings, as to how to accelerate improved learning that continues to promote the highest possible post-secondary outcomes for each student.

- The school aligns curriculum, including the Arts, to state standards along with school defined key standards and is implementing an articulated plan to integrate the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) task in all grades. (1.1)
 - o Core curricula, aligned to State standards, for a range of students of varying intellectual ability levels have been strategically chosen. Literacy units of study are now integrated with grade level themes in social studies and are purposefully adapted for alternate assessment students. This is based on data from the Student Annual Needs Development Inventory (SANDI), the Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS) and Equals, which is the complement of Everyday Math for alternate assessment students. Impact math and a project-based science curriculum are further enhanced by a Robotics class, which provides middle school students an interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving, teamwork, and effective communication, all of which further serves to promote engagement and high levels of thinking. Teachers work collaboratively, and with support from external partners, to revise curriculum maps, integrating the CCLS expectations and aligning unit tasks to the school's key standards. All told, there is a school-wide focus on higher order thinking skills across content areas that is impacting the questioning skills employed by staff. The result is a pervasive emphasis on pushing student thinking in order to ensure academic gains for all student groups.
- There is a coherent set of beliefs around effective student learning which is evident in teaching practices that lead to progress for all students. (1.2)
 - o A set of teaching methods, grounded in workshop model methodology, have been developed collaboratively based on the school's belief about their students' learning. Student groupings are based on routine diagnostics that promote engagement of students in meaningful, targeted learning tasks. Across classrooms there is a focus on explicit teaching of thinking skills across content areas, and learning experiences are planned that allow students to construct their own knowledge using those skills. Tasks are designed to challenge students' ability to engage in higher order processes such as inference or cause and effect. Specific instructional strategies, such as graphic or mnemonic organizers, are taught to promote student success. Differentiated supports are planned to give each student access to learning objectives and an appropriate mode for expressing understanding. This is demonstrated in the consistent differentiation of small group instruction, design of learning tasks and student work products, as seen during classroom visits, thereby assuring students have opportunities to practice and apply learning.
- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support the school's goals in meeting student learning needs. (1.3)
 - o The school prioritizes funds for targeted professional development in support of the school's goals. External consultants are an integral part of a strategic plan to support teachers as they develop expertise around the identified instructional practices as they apply specifically to the school's goals in mathematics and English language arts. For example, English language arts teachers work closely with an Aussie consultant to analyze a triangulated set of data points, including running records, to assure students have access to appropriately leveled text to support a goal of twenty minutes of independent reading daily. This has led to an increase in independent reading stamina and an overall gain of from one to four reading levels by 75% of the middle school students since September.

- o Teachers are programmed for one, formal collaborative team meeting each week at all sites. Key staff members have been identified as lead facilitators and work closely with external consultants/ coaches to leverage information across the team. Student data and work samples are analyzed, and learning goals are moderated against an understanding of developmentally appropriate core content skills. A common rubric is used to revise plans and create challenging tasks. Most noteworthy is the level of responsibility that teachers take in revising their beliefs about effective pedagogical practice as they share instructional strategies to overcome learning obstacles. This has resulted in teachers articulating the value and application of data analysis to inform student groupings. This is apparent in a greater focus on creating challenging targeted tasks as evidenced in the evolution of student work products that demonstrate this progress.
- Through regular use of a range of relevant data and ongoing assessment practices, leaders and faculty are able to analyze student learning outcomes and make informed instructional decisions. (2.2)
 - o Administrators and teachers use multiple data sources such as, but not limited to, NYS test data, Scantron, ABLLS, running records, and coherent rubrics for both standardized and alternate assessment students to determine performance and progress towards mastery of content. Teachers utilize data collected to inform how students are grouped as well as to determine learning experiences for all students. For example, in classrooms serving students on the autism spectrum, students engage in individual center activities that align to their Individualized Education Plan goals. As progress is tracked, tasks are refined to skill-specific activities that extend learning. Teachers are acutely aware of their students' strengths and needs and continuously work to align instruction so that structured learning center activities meet students at their instructional level and provide students with extensive opportunities to demonstrate their continued progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Formalize the structure around observations and feedback to teachers so that articulated next steps increase improvement in teacher practice and help to more effectively target professional development efforts. (4.1)
 - o Teachers receive professional support from administration in the form of formal observations, informal walkthroughs with feedback based on a research-based rubric and conversations from daily walkthroughs. Periodic data provided by lead teachers as well as logs from external consultants provide leadership with the necessary lens for less formal exchanges of follow up and support. Staff, and particularly new teachers, report how they value the support received from key lead teachers who have been identified at each site to drive school-wide initiatives and leverage information. Teachers receive specific training from a menu of external, district-based opportunities as well as professional development that comes from their direct work with the external consultants. The staff is also encouraged to gain support from peers via intervisitations. While there is a culture for adult learning that encourages professional growth, there is no formalized, actionable system that would allow administrators to clearly identify expectations for individual teachers' effectiveness and growth. As a result, there is a missed opportunity for targeted next steps that could maximize student learning.
- Refine school wide data collection practices to provide leaders, staff and family a complete picture of students' progress toward mastery in all core subjects. (5.2)

- o School leaders and faculty, including related service providers and family workers, are committed to data-driven decision making and have structures in place to regularly evaluate and communicate students' academic, behavioral and attendance performance leading to timely action in promoting positive outcomes for students. Much of the staff shares student progress to families by phone and communication notebooks. However, the system at large is not aggregating a wider range of cross-functional data to capture a more complete picture of student performance. This prevents rigorous trend analysis at the school and classroom levels, limiting adjustments to practice in order to further enhance student progress. Additionally, this prevents the school from being able to provide more specific feedback to families, other than behavioral, which limits academic skill reinforcement and generalization.
- Refine goal setting and monitoring for all faculty and professional collaborations in order to enable school leaders and faculty to adjust goals and objectives to optimize the impact of actions taken. (5.4)
 - o The school strives to build capacity via support of professional collaborations. Lead teachers are identified to support their peers on a day-to-day basis and work closely with external consultants and coaches to effectively facilitate inquiry work during teacher team meetings. Team members share a variety of student data points, including student work samples, to determine revisions of content-specific plans and to leverage effective practices. While teams have specific content and pedagogical goals, and meeting notes are taken for follow up, not all teams have a clear plan that includes timelines with interim goals. While some teachers are proactive in taking the lead on initiatives aligned to school goals, there are limited opportunities for others to lead professional learning. Thus, there is inconsistency in the way all staff work. Consequently, administration is unable to efficiently evaluate the impact of each team's work by all staff, which limits the school's ability to make improvements to build school-wide coherence of practice.
- Extend data gathering and analysis practices to all core subjects, enabling school leaders and faculty to better identify trends within student populations. (2.3)
 - o Across classrooms data binders organize information gathered from a set of cohesive assessments and diagnostics used across the school respective to the student population taught to analyze students' academic performance. However, data points for individual and groups of students are not organized to be easily accessible. As a result, deeper skill-based trend analysis across classrooms, for groups of students as well as individual students, is minimized. This leads to missed opportunities for necessary academic adjustments at both the school and classroom levels.
 - o Although standardized and alternate assessment teachers work to embed more rigor within coherent rubrics to evaluate student work products, there is a lack of consistency across classroom-based assessments. For example, teacher-made norm-referenced tests and classroom-specific grading policies lead to a skewed set of academic data that provide results that are inconsistent across the school. Therefore, information from classroom to classroom, related to student performance may be different and less helpful for data analysis purposes. This limits the school's ability to determine the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction as it impacts on student performance and progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. X017	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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