

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

John Peter Zenger

Elementary School 018

502 Morris Avenue

Bronx

NY 10451

Principal: Jasmin Varela

Dates of review: October 26 – 27, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John Peter Zenger is an elementary school with 519 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 34% Black, 64% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Multi-Racial students. The student body includes 26% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders make strategic personnel and programmatic decisions in support of the school-wide goals and the academic needs of all students. (1.3)
 - Due to the high turnover of staff, school leaders secured two coach positions in literacy and math and a Teacher Center specialist to support new teachers. As these specialists meet regularly with teachers to discuss lesson planning and student work, they provide teachers a differentiated professional support leading to improved work products and deepened reflective conversations around teacher practice.
 - Teachers and instructional specialists work with cohorts of students on a weekly basis to hone in on the skills in need of attention. Student groupings are cycled every 4-6 weeks based on the assessment outcomes. This has increased shared accountability for student progress and performance as teachers share practices during their collaborative meetings.
- The school provides families with a variety of opportunities to be involved in decision-making processes in academic and non-academic events in support of their children's learning. (2.4)
 - School leaders and teachers provide families with information about their children's academic progress at a variety of venues such as dismissal time, meet-the-teacher, and curriculum activities. Parents acknowledge their ability to air their concerns and questions to the administration leading to better communication between the families and school personnel, an area in need of focus as per the Learning Environment Survey.
 - Parents appreciate their voices being heard at the School Leadership Team meeting. They offer elicited feedback as initiatives are discussed at this meeting. The school-wide implementation of the Breakfast in Classrooms (BIC) program is an example of how the school personnel and parents collaborate in writing a letter to families on the starting date and time of this program. In addition, the school created a single gender third grade boys' class this year. In an effort to support these third grade males, a parent suggested a partnership with an all-male high school to adopt this class and offer small group tutorials. School leaders emphasize the importance of the school's partnership with parents so they have a 'pulse' on what is going on in the school leading to a sense of community ownership and the achievement of school goals.
- The staff, students, and parents understand and support the school-wide data based goals prominently posted throughout the building. (3.1)
 - School leaders shared the school-wide goals with the faculty early in the school year to ensure clarity around expectations in planning sessions and formal and informal conversations across content-specific delivery of

instruction. There is an understanding that these goals present an opportunity to leverage changes leading to students' academic and social emotional growth.

- The conversation around data based goals takes many forms within the school community. The School Leadership Team meeting is a key forum for the discussion of school-wide goals. Additionally, one-to-one meetings with teachers lead to professional development discussions and staff buy-in to school-wide expectations. As a result, targeted action planning and strategic small group instruction are in place for improved student outcomes, as stated in the school Comprehensive Educational Plan.
- School leaders support teacher development for improved teacher practice by conducting frequent cycles of classroom observations and providing differentiated feedback to teachers. (4.1)
 - The administrative classroom observation feedback is utilized to support teachers, especially new teachers. School leaders use low inference feedback to stimulate teacher reflection for improved lesson delivery. School leaders believe in the investment of supporting teacher practice by providing immediate feedback vis-à-vis adequate resources resulting in increased teacher reflection leading to professional growth.
 - School leaders use a research-based framework on teacher effectiveness to guide the conversations resulting in factual-based discussions that help teachers see areas in need of refinement. At times, teachers use the feedback as teaching points for focused instructional delivery and/or as reference to request strategic professional development support for meaningful adjustments to their teaching practice.
- The school provides teachers with opportunities to enhance their professional and leadership development via ongoing colleague-to-colleague feedback and accountability for capacity building. (5.4)
 - All teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborative teams and are accountable for ensuring that these meetings produce meaningful outcomes for their development and instructional growth. School leaders bestow in teachers the responsibility of evaluating their work via classroom inter-visitations and colleague-to-colleague honest feedback. School leaders, coaches and teacher leaders meet regularly to share the outcomes of these assessments to inform their next steps in their ongoing support to leadership development leading to increased independence and accountability for improved practice.
 - School leaders, coaches, and lead teachers chair a variety of professional development groups for all stakeholders' leadership development. This tiered professional development structure provides school leaders and teachers with opportunities to reflect on their coaching and/or leadership practices through oral and written feedback for their own enhancement and improvement of instructional practice.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that lessons engage all students in rigorous tasks that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and support development of reasoning skills. (1.1)
 - Curriculum plans and instructional discussions focus on the integration of the Common Core Learning Standards early on in the school year. However, the vast majority of lessons are teacher-directed, thereby neglecting students opportunities to engage in rigorous and challenging tasks aligned to their achievement levels.
 - Most of the lessons address the general academic needs of all students. Teacher teams use student work to discuss the targeted tasks for subgroups, such as English language learners, students with disabilities, and the lowest performing students. These discussions have yet to reflect in practice as lesson planning and classroom instruction show no evidence of multiple entry points for cognitive engagement of these students in their own learning. Therefore, students' focused academic needs are not being met.
- Promote greater consistency of differentiated instruction and tasks that meet the academic needs of all students. (1.2)
 - School leaders indicate that teachers work with data driven strategy groups to support student learning via 'scaffolded and explicit instruction. There is evidence of a few lessons that provide students with some challenging work. However, teacher practice and the work provided to students lack differentiation and instructional accommodation that address students' individual needs. Student work on bulletin boards and in class folders depicts insufficient evidence of tiered instructional support thus limiting the acceleration of student progress.
 - As the lessons - evolve and students work in partnerships or independently, teachers ask questions to assess students' understanding of the content area. However, the questions are at the lower end of the taxonomy denying students differentiated opportunities to develop their higher order thinking and reflection on their own learning.
- Refine the teacher assessment practices in order to address the needs of student subgroups, such as English language learners and students with disabilities. (2.2)
 - Teachers use classroom data such as running records and mastery checklists to identify the next steps for student learning. Although teachers meet frequently to discuss relevant strategies for these student subgroups, there is a lack of substantial analysis of data and student work to leverage change in teacher practice for improved student outcomes. There is no evidence of differentiated instruction, limiting how lessons meet the needs of these students.
 - Most classrooms display student work with rubrics loosely aligned to key standards, not content-specific. Teachers' feedback lacks effective and

strategic next steps hindering students' ability to make progress in their journey towards learning.

- Review classroom goal-setting procedures to ensure that additional instructional supports are data driven and challenging in order to accelerate student progress. (3.2)
 - School leaders state that teachers use formative and summative data to develop SMART goals for small group instruction. These goals are set to ensure that the instructional support aligns with classroom practice and, ultimately, student learning. Nonetheless, these goals are inconsistently evident in teacher assessment binders and/or conferral notes resulting in uneven learning outcomes for students.
 - The leadership indicates that teachers are starting to look at data and make connections in order to leverage changes in classroom practice. Although the discussion of goals takes place at the team meetings, there is no evidence of the alignment or progression of these goals limiting how change is leveraged in classroom practice for student progress.
- Refine the structures in place to evaluate the curricular adjustments and instructional practices in the classrooms. (5.1)
 - School leaders and coaches are in the initial stages in the use of protocols aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. However, these protocols have not yet resulted in significant needed changes to instruction or use of resources, limiting opportunities for student academic growth.
 - Skills assessments are administered on a biweekly basis to evaluate how the school-designed performance tasks for the strategic groupings accelerate student learning. Although these results are regularly monitored by the administration, there is no evidence of how alignment or coherence between what is taught and what students need in order to excel in their learning are assessed. Therefore the effectiveness of curricular decisions and adjustments throughout the year is limited.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: John Peter Zenger	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