

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**The Melrose School  
Elementary/Middle School 029  
758 Courtlandt Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10451**

**Principal: Meredith Gotlin**

**Dates of review: November 22 – 23, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Melrose School is an elementary/middle school with 765 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 34% Black, 61% Hispanic, 3% White, 1% American Indian, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Classroom teaching practices align with students' needs as evidenced by differentiated small group work. (1.2 )
  - Teachers work with the Common Core Department of Education bundles to plan a vast majority of lessons with differentiated tasks incorporating a variety of visual cues and manipulatives as a means to support students' learning. These tasks involve students at varied levels of engagement resulting in academic outcomes that inform teachers of students' next steps towards learning.
  - As students "chat" during their turn and talk with peers in response to the overarching questions posed by their teachers, teachers listen in and check for understanding. Additionally, students work collaboratively by engaging in a sharing of their work via academic discourse for feedback from both peers and teachers, resulting in the refinement of their thinking process and, hence, their writing products.
- The use of technology and other resources support the school's overall goals in order to meet the diverse learning needs of students. (1.3 )
  - The integration of technology is a commitment to the instructional progress and organizational functioning of the school. Teachers' professional development plan incorporates month-by-month areas of foci for the integration of technology to increase student engagement in the instructional process. Each teacher has a laptop to access school-wide data, emails, school website, teacher team meeting agendas, and important links, thus ensuring full access to information relative to providing suitable support for students. School leaders, during individual discussions with teachers, focus on each teacher's strategies around the use of technology in meeting the instructional needs of their students, thus holding them more accountable to addressing their students' needs and their own professional growth.
  - A vast majority of teachers engages in collaborative work aligned to the school goals, and discusses grade and content-specific topics, resulting in the improvement of lesson delivery. The sharing of lesson plans, aligned to the standards, includes strategies that help students improve their task-based performance and expected outcomes. Teachers receive instructional support from the coach and the assistant principal relative to the improvement of their practice in classroom instruction and view online their recorded next steps, resulting in a tool that is used by teachers and school leaders as a reference for instructional and/or professional follow-up. .
- The school has a systemic approach in the use and organization of data to identify trends in student performance resulting in strategic school-level decisions. (2.3)

- School leaders and teachers use school-designed progress reports to track student performance. The school-wide grading system has been refined, thus providing an alignment across grades. The use of these tools provides ongoing snapshots of school-wide trends for informed school-level instructional decisions leading to more targeted instruction.
- Teachers use formative assessment tools such as running records, conference notes, and student work to assess student progress. This collection of data leverages teachers' and school leaders' understanding on the instructional direction in support of students' continuing academic improvement, as evidenced by recent analysis noting student progress. As staff capture the instructional trends on student performance, they make informed decisions resulting in small group strategy-driven lessons thus providing students additional support towards content mastery.
- Teams of teachers use a variety of assessment data on student learning to review student progress in order to make instructional decisions that address students' academic deficiencies. (2.2)
  - Teachers' use of formative and summative assessment data captures students' areas of expertise, identifies those in need of additional focus, and informs high, medium, and low, fluid student groupings for whom teachers prepare tasks or assignments. This analysis further offers teachers the opportunity to adjust the instruction at the classroom level to meet students' academic needs.
  - During independent practice, teachers survey students' performance by conducting frequent check-ins around students' understanding of the task. These check-ins, such as purposeful conferral time, accountable talk, peer-to-peer feedback vis-à-vis student rubrics, help inform teachers on students' learning outcomes. This varied assessment process leads to immediate instructional adjustment that helps students reach the expected outcome of lesson.
- Teacher effectiveness is a high priority as evidenced by formal and informal observations leading to frequent feedback on teacher practice. (4.1)
  - School leaders who emphasize that teacher effectiveness is of utmost importance for students' academic improvement, schedule school-wide formal and informal observations in advance of the beginning of the school year. This organized framework allows school leaders to use a school-designed Instructional Professional Development Plan (IPDP) to give teachers meaningful, timely, feedback on detailed objectives for improvement of practice, and serves as a reflection on their own craft as providers of feedback. This feedback document, completed in collaboration with the teachers, ensures clarity around expected outcomes, and is used in the development of a differentiated, two-week support plan that is followed up by school leaders conducting classroom visits to ascertain teacher progress in noted areas.
  - The school commitment to the professional development of all teachers, with an eye to those awaiting tenure, is evident in the hiring of instructional specialists who provide the needed support for staffs' professional growth. The outcomes of the professional development

sessions have resulted in the reorganization of some teacher assignments to grades or content areas so that their areas of expertise is well matched and positively impact on student outcomes.

- All teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations, which support leadership development and professional growth. (4.2 )
  - Every teacher is engaged in structured collaborative team meetings as evidenced by the school-wide schedule, online agendas, and attendance sheets. As teachers assess student work, they build an understanding of students' needs, engage in discussions with their colleagues on how to provide adequate instructional support across content areas, and focus on the incorporation of strategies geared towards students' improvement within their lessons.
  - Team leaders meet regularly with the administration to discuss instructional expectations. Assistant principals and teachers attend professional development institutes to further their practice and share the acquired knowledge with their colleagues. This process provides opportunities for instructional leaders and teachers to engage in collaborative learning and sharing. Staff members take ownership of their content-specific responsibilities, thus contributing to a professional learning community focused on capacity building and improved student performance as evidenced by student work and assessment outcomes.

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

- Build on the curriculum decisions on rigorous tasks to ensure that all learners are able to demonstrate and articulate their thinking across subjects. (1.1)
  - School leaders indicate that much reflection has taken place this year regarding how they have focused on rigor. They posed the following question to the school community: *"If it did not work in the past, why would we do it the same way again?"* understanding that something different had to take place. Instructional conversations school-wide have deepened, focusing on how rigor sounds and looks like in classrooms and in student work. Although the curriculum reflects challenging academic expectations and conversations are taking place, there is still inconsistent evidence showing that all students are cognitively engaged in rigorous tasks including the ability to articulate their reasoning of complex tasks.
  - As teachers plan collaboratively, they use the provided Common Core bundles and other resources to inform their practice in order to build students' higher order thinking skills. In spite of the lessons providing opportunities for the development of students' cognitive skills, there is inconsistent evidence showing students' involvement in challenging academic experiences that lead to applying their learning to new situations and/or relate concepts in other contexts across grades and subject areas.
- Increase family engagement in school activities so that more families are involved in the decision-making process and in exchange of information in support of student performance. (2.4)

- Parent participation in the decision-making process, school activities, and the school leadership team as a forum to share ideas and set parent involvement goals is a priority, as stated by the principal. Although school outreach to families is ongoing, only a handful of parents are involved in the decision-making process, which leads to minimal evidence of family engagement in discussions on student performance.
- Teachers provide parents with information on their children's assessment results and on the school grading policy. Additionally, the school provides opportunities for families to learn how to use ARIS to track their children's progress. However, the low percentage of parent involvement limits their awareness of performance trends in order to support their children's learning.
- Refine the process for setting student goals in order to better leverage change in classroom practice and students' understanding on how to achieve mastery. (3.2 )
  - Teachers revisit on an ongoing basis the impact of interventions by looking at the analysis of benchmarks in literacy and math. Individual teachers and teacher teams include students in setting goals and work on classroom goals to align their practice and individual needs. However, there is an inconsistency in students' understanding how their goals help them build and improve their future learning.
  - Teacher teams set student-learning goals informed by data; however, there is inconsistent evidence in classroom instruction that shows the impact of these goals to the instructional needs of the students, resulting in differentiated outcomes.
- Revise systems for measuring the attainment of student goals to ensure that strategic classroom instruction meets students' individual needs. (5.3 )
  - The school uses the prior year's data to plan long-term goals to set the focus for the present school year. This process has helped school leaders refine and streamline their use of data for the development of and measuring the attainment of the school-wide goals. In addition, teachers use the school-wide goals with a range of data such as conferencing and notebook checks to set student goals in their classrooms. Discussions on student goals are in place, but the tracking of progress towards their attainment is inconsistent amongst teachers. This inconsistent practice adversely affects students' ability to understand and articulate how teachers measure goal attainment to improve performance, and hinders teachers from monitoring effectively the progress of all students.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: The Melrose School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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>	

<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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<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>