

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

The Belmont School

X032

**690 E. 183rd Street
Bronx
NY 10458**

Principal: Adalia Rosamilia

Dates of review: March 28 - 29, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Hoa Tu

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Belmont School (PS 32) is an elementary school with 762 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 23% Black, 74% Hispanic, 2% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 24% 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 93.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well-developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has a coherent strategy and structure for designing engaging and challenging curricular tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards for a variety of learners, supporting postsecondary readiness for all. (1.1)
 - Each grade team meets regularly for extended periods of time to develop curricula using the Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop Framework to ensure that content and skills are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and that they foster student mastery. Teacher teams engage in studying student work data to design and modify units and plan pedagogical strategies for lesson implementation, resulting in a common curriculum per grade. Consequently, 84% of third graders moved two to three Fountas and Pinnell reading levels by mid-year on the Teachers College Quick Assessment.
 - Teachers analyze student work samples carefully to build in modifications and multiple entry points for students with disabilities and English language learners, resulting in increased volume and quality of students' writing over time as evident by student portfolios. Furthermore, an average of 80% of students across grades have exceeded the school's benchmarks in reading and writing by mid-year. The fact that the school earned a total of nine extra credit points for growth and performance of students with disabilities and English language learners in their 2010-2011 Progress Report is further testament to their effort in this area.
- The principal and her instructional cabinet make informed and effective organizational decisions that support improvements in teaching and learning. (1.3)
 - Re-assignment of teachers with poor student achievement data and strategic adjustments for leave-replacement, such as using the teacher center coordinator to cover a maternity leave, ensure the maximization of teacher strengths and quality instruction for all students. The principal astutely recognizes the talent of a teacher and strategically reassigned that teacher from a fourth grade class to a school-wide science teacher. This teacher excelled in her new position and, as a result, yielded 76% of students (including 77% of English language learners) meeting the school-wide science goal for the same students who struggled with performance in this class from the previous year.
 - The principal relentlessly pursues grants and donations to enhance her school's resources and enrichment programs. She secured funds for a new pool, a new library and a technology lab as well as supplies for enrichment courses including art, drumming, fashion design and even guitars for the guitar class. Students reported that they were thrilled that they get to keep their guitar after completing the course. Students also shared that they thought they would never be able to learn how to swim. They are now proud to have a pool in their building and report that they are advancing in their swimming skills. The many other programs result in

students' artwork decorating the hallways of the school as well as student-produced live concerts and fashion shows.

- Teachers and teams work collaboratively to utilize data and create assessments, track student performance and define instructional practices and classroom decisions to raise students' academic achievement. (2.2)
 - The school-designed "6+1" writing rubric incorporates existing writing features with key CCLS indicators to ensure that there is coherence and consistent practice across all grades. Students are engaged in the writing process and work with teachers to recognize next learning steps, thus building understanding and ownership for their learning.
 - Teacher teams regularly supplement current assessment with team-designed rubrics, surveys and check lists to monitor and adjust instruction for student progress. For instance, the Fact, Question and Response organizer was developed in inquiry team and was subsequently used school-wide to elevate students' capacity to read complex texts and engage in text-dependent questioning, resulting in school-wide revision of grade goals in reading and writing when progress was made at mid-year. For example, in grade three, the reading goal was revised from 80% to 90% of students reading on grade level by the end of the year.
- Administrators effectively use classroom observations and student outcomes to design professional development that impacts on the growth of teachers and their instruction to students. (4.1)
 - The instructional team developed an informal observation tool, aligned to Danielson's effective teaching framework, to capture teachers' and students' actions and provide actionable feedback. This tool, along with intervisitation and learning walks conducted by the administrative and teacher teams, allows school leaders to provide timely feedback to teachers which further improve teachers' practice in the classrooms as noted in both formal and informal written observations.
 - All faculty and staff engage in professional development activities that are differentiated for their individual personal and professional growth based on school leaders' observations and goal setting conferences with administrators. This results in higher teacher retention and self reported satisfaction and professional growth by the teachers via teacher team interviews and individual class visits debriefs with teachers.
- The positive school tone supports the academic, social and personal growth of teachers and students. (1.4)
 - The school tone is warm and welcoming. Parents and teachers are in constant communication over each student's academic and social development and parents and students are well known by at least one adult in the building. Students report that there is "no bullying here" with one student adding, "you turn a corner and you see a teacher and they protect you." The school carefully analyzed attendance reports then revised outreach to families using the School Messenger system to ensure timely calls to tardy and absent students. Subsequently, attendance increased from 91% in the past two years to 93.7% this year.

- Students talk animatedly about the support they receive and the strategies their teachers use to help them assess their own learning by using rubrics and editing their own and each other's work. Multiple students report that "we know we are learning by the feedback" given by teachers. Teachers engage students in setting their personal learning goals, thus ensuring that students are engaged in their own learning process. Students were proud that they were part of the focus groups in developing school-wide rubrics and that the school added enrichment classes such as soccer and the Glee Club after they suggested it.
- School leaders and faculty gather and analyze a comprehensive array of formative and summative data in order to create a complete picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. (2.1)
 - Teacher teams across grades utilize protocols to share student work and then discuss the strengths and areas for development observed in the work samples. The teams analyze the students' latest running records, reading levels, library data, writing samples and math assessments and then determine an instructional strategy, adjusting curriculum to meet the needs of the identified student. As a result, teachers are able to provide scaffolds and alternatives tasks to meet the needs of specific students. For example, the 5th grade English as a second language teacher incorporated total physical response strategies as well as whole class choral responses to engage emergent English language learners.
 - Faculty and staff consistently supplement summative data with qualitative data. Each teacher has a data binder that contains students' learning goals and teachers' conference notes for each subject as well as family and student surveys, students' feedback and reflections. Both students and teachers use the binders regularly to monitor student progress. The Response to Intervention team made use of the low inference notes and concluded that students lacked multiple ways to demonstrate mastery and developed additional Tier 1 strategies for classroom teachers. As a result, the school has seen a 53% decrease in referrals this school year and an increased in use of Tier 1 strategies, such as centers and choice cards, to increase students' choice and build mastery across classrooms.
- School leaders communicate high expectation to staff, students and families and build in multiple pathways to support staff and students' achievement of short- and long-term goals. (3.4)
 - The school leaders and faculty collectively create a weekly communiqué with announcements, expectations for instructional walkthroughs and professional obligations such as team meeting schedules and agendas for any given week. The entire faculty is invited to contribute to the document via Google Docs and the completed document is posted outside the main office. This public and flexible forum created a culture of mutual accountability for the faculty and leadership team.
 - When asked about how the school communicates its expectations, parents smiled and said, "How do we NOT know what is going on with our children?" They then listed the many ways in which they received information on their child from the staff and faculty including periodic progress reports, updated websites, emails between teachers and

parents, and daily synopsis on the children's day at dismissals. The school fosters an open exchange of academic and behavioral information with students and families, resulting in parents and students taking ownership of the students' growth and learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Further support teachers in strengthening pedagogy to ensure that instruction is differentiated with higher order thinking as demanded by the CCLS to maximum learning for all students across all grades and classrooms. (1.2)
 - The school's instructional philosophy is to ensure that students are engaged and teachers are asking higher ordering thinking questions; however teachers' experiences are not distributed across all grades. While the kindergarten and first grade classes show high levels of effectiveness, some of the upper grade classes do not. While differentiation occurs, learning experiences are not strategically differentiated across all classrooms and grade levels to ensure that all learners have multiple entry points and enriched extensions for high achievers. For example, checklists and reflections are used to assess when a student completes a task but the checklist is not used to assess if a student comprehends the task. Consequently, students miss opportunities that challenge them to achieve higher learning outcomes.
- Continue to build on the successes of the Response to Intervention team and further integrate the guidance department to accelerate the academic growth of students. (4.4)
 - The school has begun to increase the number of staff trained in Positive Behavior Intervention Systems and Life Space Crisis Intervention but the connection to classroom instruction has not yet been fully realized. For example, 70% of reported incidents took place in the same few classrooms of teachers who continue to struggle with effective use of the strategies, leading to hindered learning for students in these classes. In addition, while the guidance team is supportive of teachers when called upon, they are not a regular presence at grade team meetings, thus opportunities to consistently incorporate guidance and advisement with academic data are missed.
- Deepen the use of existing structures and systems for assessing students to further align curricula development and pedagogy specific to raise the achievement of English language learners and students with disabilities. (5.2)
 - The school has disaggregated academic data extensively on English language learners and students with disabilities; however, this is not yet translated into specific action plans to support an influx of English language learners and students with disabilities, thus learning opportunities for these subgroups are currently limited.
 - While the school has systems in place to evaluate performance and communicate with parents and students on a regular basis, they have not yet sufficiently analyzed what and how to communication with students with disabilities. The fact that students with disabilities are unaware of

their specific challenges prevents them from maximizing their goal setting and delays their progress in those areas.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name:	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>				
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>				
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>				
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