

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Timothy Dwight Elementary School

Elementary School 033

2424 Jerome Avenue

Bronx

NY 10468

Principal: Lynette Santos

Dates of review: May 31 - June 1, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Timothy Dwight is an elementary school with 1,043 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 11% Black, 86% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 33% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is pro-active in identifying additional funding sources to support the school's instructional goals and meet the needs of all students. (1.3)
 - In spite of budgetary constraints, the school maintains three assistant principals, full-time math and literacy coaches, two guidance counselors, a part-time staff developer, consultant teaching residents, and eight English as a second language teachers to accommodate the school's very high English language learner population, measuring 33% of all students. Reso-A grants are combined with the school budget to provide smart boards, laptops, and projectors, to infuse technology into classroom activities. Staff and student time is structured to establish daily 90-minute literacy and math periods in alignment with the school's belief that students learn best in student-centered environments utilizing the workshop model. Each grade contains gifted and talented, English as second language, bilingual, special education, and general education classes to meet the needs of all students. Literacy and math curriculum teacher teams create calendars and common core-based units of study aligned by grades both horizontally and vertically. Grade teacher teams meet once each week to conduct inquiry, write curriculum and design strategies that improve instruction. As a result, hallways and classrooms contain copious common core aligned student work displays, and recent Acuity data indicates overall proficiency rate increases of 3% in English language arts and 5% in math.
- The principal and staff work as a unified team to create a calm, respectful, and orderly environment. (1.4)
 - The school uses a Positive Behavior Intervention in Schools program to ensure that the school's safe and respectful environment is maintained. A coach trains the staff and students to use the program and children receive stars for positive actions that can be exchanged for prizes as a reward. Guidance counselors work together with school clinicians to provide ongoing counseling for individual and groups of students while administrators conduct advisory groups with targeted students to ensure social-emotional support. As a result, students are well known by multiple adults, incident occurrence reporting has dropped 50%, and suspension rates are at their lowest levels as compared to prior years.
- The school has good communication systems for keeping parents informed of school activities and their children's progress and regularly involves them in decision-making. (2.4)
 - In addition to regular Department of Education report cards, the school uses a detailed grade-specific progress report for each student that is sent home every other month to keep parents abreast of their children's progress in all subjects, including behavior development. The subject matter of each grade's progress report changes based on current curriculum map content and common core-aligned unit tasks. A grade 5 January student progress report uses 1 through 4 mastery ratings to

measure student abilities in reading non-fiction text, writing opinions, using fractions and decimals, and understanding nutrition and the United States Constitution, thus in alignment with curriculum maps and identified areas of focus. Teachers personalize these reports by indicating strengths and next step suggestions for each subject area based on a wide array of data that they use to measure and communicate ongoing student progress.

- The school leadership team and parent/teacher association meetings are well attended and contain the full complement of required school and community members. In addition, the principal conducts monthly tea times with parents to gather feedback and gain insight that serves in helping in school decision-making. Parental input has resulted in more frequent honors ceremonies to celebrate student success with newly designed principal awards recognizing students for attendance, respect, community service, and academic achievement, thereby increasing familial engagement.
- Teachers collaborate to examine student work, plan together, and visit each other's classrooms, to share ideas and best practice, through a desire to improve student outcomes. (4.2)
 - Almost all teachers collaborate on teams one or more times each week serving on grade, curriculum, and/or data inquiry teams, and use the inquiry process to look at student and teacher work. The Data Inquiry Team analyzes student writing using a desired thinking versus current thinking protocol tool to determine implications for teacher planning and instruction, fostering ownership and promoting distributive leadership in the process.
 - Teachers gather copious amounts of data through reading progress tracking, English language arts and math portfolio performance task evaluations, and weekly assessments by performance indicators for literacy and math. This information combined with Acuity periodic assessment, summative assessment item analysis, and conferencing notes, is maintained in data binders, thereby enabling teachers to look deeply into individual students and groups of students to adjust instruction accordingly. All grade teams regularly take turns visiting a different team member's classroom each month using a Cambridge protocol for observation and debriefing to facilitate improved instruction, resulting in high levels of collegiality and a willingness to improve pedagogy.
- The school's systems and partnerships support students and their families in continual learning and promote students' personal growth and development. (4.4)
 - The school partners with the New York State Initiative for Emergent Bilinguals who assist the school in implementing effective English as a second language programs and building student self-esteem through its English language learner leadership team. These supportive measures have enabled English language learners to average a growth of three Fountas and Pinnel reading levels so far this year.

- A partnership with an outside mental health organization provides consultants who teach staff to use effective management techniques that include the use of various tactile, visual, and auditory cues with students, thus contributing to the school's respectful and positive environment.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote greater consistency in pedagogical practices so that all lesson plans engage students of all ability levels. (1.2)
 - While the school espouses pedagogical beliefs aligned with workshop model practices, some of classrooms visited exhibited teacher-directed lesson activities that are not reflective of a student-centered environment. For instance, teachers of a fourth/fifth grade collaborative team teaching class took turns presenting one at a time to the entire class for over one half of the period with an abundance of teacher-to-student questions, very little student-to-student interaction, and repetitive student note-taking without the use of manipulative tools, during a lesson involving division, thereby impeding efforts to support an environment that follows the school's belief relative to how students learn best.
 - Most teachers differentiate instruction by establishing high, medium, and low student ability groups. However, questioning is frequently not differentiated, hampering efforts to establish effective multiple entry points. Questioning designed to push student thinking is not addressed in most lesson plans, providing missed opportunities to engage students in higher order thinking.
- Augment coherence and alignment in the school's curriculum to design lessons that emphasize higher order thinking and identified key standards across the school and scaffold activities to meet the needs of all learners. (1.1)
 - Administrators and teachers work together through English language arts and math curriculum teams to build units of study and academic tasks aligned to Common Core Learning Standards with an emphasis on the use of informational text across grades. However, some class routines fail to emphasize higher order thinking and tasks are not refined to engage a diversity of learners. Students in a first grade self-contained special education class compared policemen to firemen and then worked in smaller groups as part of a social studies paragraph writing exercise, copying word-for-word sentences provided to them by the adult leading their group. Other classes displayed paragraph work that reveals identical writing for all students in the class, thereby reducing their writing experiences to copying exercises that do not engage students in developing independence for writing.
- Deepen the school's use of rubrics by aligning them with State standards across subjects to provide clear expectations, self-assessment opportunities for students, and provide next steps for improvement. (2.2)
 - A wide array of assessments such as weekly school designed Scantron evaluations, Acuity and Rally periodic assessments, Developmental Reading Assessments, E-Class and math unit assessments, measure

student progress. Teachers use a binder system to keep track of student academic growth, but do not disaggregate subgroup student strengths and areas of need. Many student work products are rated on a 1 through 4 scale, however, rubrics that explain exactly what the ratings mean are not evident. Students understand that a 1 is low and 4 is above expectations, but are unable to comprehend what they need to do to increase the quality of their work, except in the case of limited teacher feedback comments that make non-rubric based suggestions to improve work quality. The lack of these structures provides missed opportunities for students to self-assess the quality of their work and for teachers to measure the effectiveness of their instruction.

- Strengthen the use of the school's observation tools by using a research-based framework to provide focused feedback and next steps based on frequent visitation cycles to improve pedagogy for all teachers. (4.1)
 - School leaders support teachers with formal and informal observation feedback that is based on Danielson, Santa Cruz, and Rally teaching principles. The Rally observations, from a non-research based system, use an actual framework to measure performance but does not include low inference observations to substantiate ratings. Comments to teachers do include suggestions about questioning, differentiation, and student engagement strategies. However, a research-based structure is not used to link teacher actions to a rubric, thwarting efforts to fully connect feedback to a uniform framework that is focused on improving pedagogy. The principals and assistant principals split teachers into groups for observations. Evidence provided showed a new teacher's observation file contained two 2012 environmental checklists, one walkthrough checklist, and notes from a formal observation conducted three months ago that had not been finalized, thus indicating infrequent cycles of observation without relevant timely feedback or a special focus on educators new to the profession.
- Condense school goals based upon prioritized school needs and design action plans for each that include interim- and long-term data-based goals to ensure transparency and focused support by the entire school community. (3.1)
 - There are seventeen school wide instructional goals this year with increased annual performance targets listed for most subjects and populations. However, interim objectives and detailed action plans for many sections are not evident, thereby hampering efforts to focus attention on key areas of need. The school's long list of goals regarding objective priorities, hampers the school in having clear foci, resulting in the school not making adequate yearly progress in English language arts and math.
 - Goal setting and action planning occur during retreats and initiatives that take place outside of the regular school day and rely on feedback from the school's curriculum teams. This process limits teacher input into the planning process, thereby impeding goal understanding and support by the entire school community.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Timothy Dwight Elementary School	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