

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Thomas C. Giordano

Middle school 045

**2502 LORILLARD PLACE
BRONX
NY 10458**

Principal: Annamaria Giordano

Dates of review: March 23 - 24, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Elif Gure

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Thomas C. Giordano Middle School 45 is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 1017 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 14% Black, 80% Hispanic, 4% White, 2% Asian students and 0% other students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 20% 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 91.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders maintain a highly inclusive, safe and respectful learning environment that supports personal and academic learning for all students. (1.4)
 - o A big and bold school banner that reads, "Increase the Awesome!" combined with brightly colored, print rich hallways, organized classrooms, and dedicated teachers who are present in the hallways to greet students, messages that everyone is welcome and expected to succeed at Intermediate School 45. Positive Behavioral Intervention Model (PBIS) frames the school's approach to classroom and behavior management while providing a common understanding and language regarding behavioral expectations for students and adults. The small learning community structure established through three mini schools, allows students to have the same group of teachers, a guidance counselor, dean and a social worker for three years. Teachers and staff mentor at-risk students using a "check-in/check out" system which involve brief mentor/mentee meeting upon arrival and dismissal. . As a result, each student is known well and there is consistency and continuity around coordinating students' personal and academic needs.
- The highly collaborative principal makes key strategic decisions that support school wide goals and promote increased student outcomes. (1.3)
 - o The principal in collaboration with the consultation committee identified a highly effective teacher in each content area and re-programmed their schedules to include five coaching periods every week. These teachers who are now called Instructional Facilitators (IF) use their own classrooms as lab-sites and coach teachers in pairs and/or groups on lesson planning, differentiated questioning techniques, and integration of instructional technology. IF's also facilitate content team meetings, content area data collection, and the integration of Common Core Learning Standards into the curriculum. Data-based student grouping that was spearheaded and modeled by IF's was evident in the classrooms visited. Teachers and administrators refer to these new distributive leadership structures as the primary force behind the increasing collaborative and reflective school culture that is focused on student achievement.
 - o The instructional cabinet re-organized the extended day program to include all sixth graders, English language learners (ELL), and students with disabilities, in addition to all other students who scored level 1 on the previous year's English language arts (ELA) and math State exams. These students, in groups of ten, receive targeted instruction in two month cycles from the most effective ELA and math teachers. Student groups are flexible and change every two weeks based on formative assessment results. The most recent instructionally targeted assessment results (ITA) indicate that more than 60% of the extended day students are beginning to show progress towards mastery of the identified skills.
- The school's standards aligned curricula offer rigorous learning experiences that are designed to promote higher order thinking skills for all students. (1.1)
 - o School leaders and teachers have strategically aligned the ELA, math, social studies, and science curriculum, to the key standards highlighted in the 2011-12 Citywide Instructional Expectations. Grade and content area teams use end-of-

unit assessment data to further modify units and better align lessons to the standards and learning targets. Based on assessment of students' independent reading responses, teachers critically evaluated their existing prompts and revised them to stress differentiated levels of critical thinking to meet the demands of the CCLS. Revised prompts now address standards for both literary and informational text and engage students in higher levels of thinking and analysis. As a result, students are able to read and understand increasingly complex text in variety of genres. Students also communicate their understanding of these texts as a whole through reading responses that evidence critical analysis supported with textual as well as contextual evidence. Students report that they understand the demands of their courses and know that they are being prepared to succeed beyond middle school.

- Teachers and administrators regularly and consistently gather and analyze summative and formative data to identify student achievement trends at the school. (2.1)
 - o Administrators' and teachers' analysis of summative data including the Progress Report and prior year State exam item skills analysis, attendance, and behavior data, as well as special education referral trends, supported the school in identifying strengths and deficits for individuals and relevant subgroups. Consequently, the school identified the sixth grade as the lowest performing group in both ELA and math. Additionally, performance trends on the State item skills analysis report, for general education and special needs students showed limited progress in the area of comprehension, particularly in sub-skills such as inference and drawing conclusions. This led to the assignment of the most effective teachers to incoming sixth graders, their inclusion in an extended day instructional program, and the expanded use of response to intervention strategies across classrooms during the regular instructional day. As a result, special education referrals are minimized and those students who as a result of a formalized evaluation require services are being programmed into least restrictive classroom environments. Predictive assessments also indicate increased student progress compared to the previous year data.
- School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to adults and students, and provide supports to ensure that everyone achieves their best. (3.4)
 - o School leaders who engage teachers and staff in the exploration of the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) at the beginning of the school year then involved teachers in the use of the chosen common teaching framework to self-assess and identify their strengths and areas of growth. To this end, school leaders held book study sessions to train teachers on looking at student work and developing tiered activities as well as creating common assessments. Weekly, the principal distributes a newsletter to all staff members highlighting important dates, deadlines, and priorities of the week. Additionally, assistant principals present weekly content newsletters that further underscore key instructional, curricular and assessment expectations in each content area, ensuring that communication around organizational and instructional priorities is clear, consistent, and timely. To hold teachers accountable, administrators utilize snapshot observations throughout the school year relative to the implementation of the CIE. High expectations extend to perfect staff attendance, which is made public and celebrated alongside perfect student attendance, so that adults as role models are encouraged to lead by example and everyone is supported and held accountable for reaching their personal best.

- o Teachers and staff hold ongoing orientation sessions for new and incoming students throughout the school year, communicating expectations around attendance, coursework, grading policy, and behavior. Organizational skills curriculum is mandatory for all grade 6 students to support them in establishing useful study and organizational skills necessary for success in the middle school and beyond. Guidance and advisement supports, provided by academy-based counselors through whole class and small group sessions, ensure personal barriers to academic success are eliminated. Furthermore, students participate in peer mediation sessions to work through immediate conflicts and acquire preventative skills to minimize recurrence of incidents between and among students. As a result, a significant number of eighth graders were accepted to specialized high schools this year and grade 6 through 7 students already know to which high schools and colleges they plan to apply.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase teacher capacity in designing varied learning experiences to meet differentiated student needs and promote cognitive engagement. (1.2)
 - o Although most classrooms reflect components of the workshop model as the school's common teaching framework, and the data-based approach to lesson planning is evidenced by pre-planned student groupings in each visited classroom, teaching strategies, questioning and assignments that meet varied student needs are inconsistent across classrooms. In some classrooms, students worked on purposefully differentiated tasks using the same high-level text with varied content, practicing skills they need to improve. Teacher modeling and questioning in these classroom, promoted peer-to-peer discussion while holding students to high expectations around critical thinking backed by inferential or textual evidence. However, in other classrooms despite the evidence of data-based student grouping, the tasks did not match student needs, questioning did not promote focused and deep thinking, and students were not held accountable to support their written and oral claims by applicable evidence and/or coherent arguments. As a result, students are engaged in thinking that is uneven, some producing work that reflects the rigor of instruction, high expectations and skillful facilitation of the teacher, others simply copy what's on the board, answering isolated questions that only require them recall, repeat, and circling the correct answer.
- Focus the use of ongoing assessment practices to identify student achievement trends at the grade level and consistently utilize ongoing checks of understanding during lessons so that adjustments can be made to meet all student needs. (2.2)
 - o All content area teachers create their own common classroom assessments and teachers in teams are working on improving the alignment of their assessments to key standards reflected in their units. Although teacher teams utilize the results of these assessments to identify student strengths and weaknesses, discussion and next steps are focused on individual or group of students in each classroom, limiting opportunities to pinpoint patterns and trends of achievement by content and grade. In the absence of enhanced formative data analysis that is focused on identifying student performance across grades and content areas, strategic efforts to improve student outcomes solely take place in individual classrooms, impacting only a limited number of students.
 - o Most teachers use entry slips, and/or open ended pre-unit assessments to identify gaps between current student ability and the skills and processes required by the unit. Suitable adjustments are then made to unit plans to ensure

appropriate scaffolding is embedded. However, use of ongoing comprehension checks by teachers, during the delivery of daily lessons is inconsistent across classrooms. Some teachers incorporate strategic, ongoing questioning to ensure all students are able to follow the lesson at hand, while other teachers move from one lesson component to the next without a single check, hindering their ability to make immediate or timely adjustments to the lessons to ensure meeting student learning needs.

- Strengthen feedback practices around pedagogy to include student data analysis, and fully connect feedback to a common language of clear expectations to increase professional growth and teacher leadership. (4.1)
 - o School leaders support all teachers through the use of classroom observation feedback that consistently communicates what teachers do well and what they need to improve. However, language of the school's common framework for effective practice and the teacher feedback does not fully align, hindering supervisors' ability to clearly articulate expectations for effective pedagogical practices. Furthermore, student work analysis is not used concurrently with the observation process, or is professional development precise to teacher's needs, thus limiting opportunities for outcome focused coaching, reflection, and improved teaching and learning.
- Strengthen structured teacher collaborations through the use of student data and protocols to extend shared leadership and focus on improved student learning. (4.2)
 - o A majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations and their use of an inquiry approach is improving a focus on analyzing student writing via established protocols. Teachers use open-ended common assessment results to track student progress towards meeting the demands of the CCLS aligned tasks and plan appropriate curricular modifications. Some of the teamwork, however, is focused on data predominantly from multiple-choice assessments, skills-based approach to problem solving for individual students, and guidance supports. As a result, the work of all teams does not consistently result in improved teacher practice and student outcomes.
- Provide ongoing, differentiated and job-embedded professional development that promotes professional reflection as well as growth in order to improve teaching and learning. (4.3)
 - o The school has a professional development plan in place and the trainings provided in and out of the school are connected to school goals and the implementation of the CCLS aligned tasks. However, learning opportunities offered to teachers do not consistently align with their needs identified through self-assessment and the observation process. Furthermore, school-based learning opportunities in the form of intervisitations, modeling, debriefing and coaching are not consistent and formalized. This hinders the school's ability to ensure that a consistent approach for professional development is maintained to improve teaching and learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Thomas C. Giordano	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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