

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Pura Belpre**

**Elementary School 064**

**1425 Walton Avenue**

**Bronx**

**NY 10452**

**Principal: Tara O'Brien**

**Dates of review: March 6 – 7, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Linda Trifon**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Pura Belpre is an elementary school with 806 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 15% Black, 83% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 49% English language learners and 11% 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 93.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders make informed organizational decisions that support teaching and learning. (1.3)
  - “When I got here 1 ½ years ago, there was no vertical or horizontal alignment to the curriculum,” stated the principal. Thus three academies were created to support teaching and learning at the school. The Achieve Academy, with second language learners in classrooms with the general education population, the Triumph Academy for students with disabilities, and the Prosper Academy for dual language and transitional students, each has a literacy and math coach assigned to assist the teachers in meeting students’ similar academic needs. This has resulted in an increase of collegiality and collaboration as well as an impact on student learning.
  - To further advance the achievement of all students, school leaders, and staff members researched and purchased supplemental literacy materials that incorporate suggested literacy lessons, word study lessons, and instructional strategies designed to increase language acquisition of second language learners. Teacher time, so structured that there are multiple opportunities for collaboration, includes time for teacher to meet for a minimum of 180 minutes per week to plan, discuss instructional strategies, and focus on improving instruction. The February predictives confirm that students are making progress.
- School leaders use classroom observations and the analysis of student learning outcomes to determine areas of instructional need. (4.1)
  - New teachers paired up with teacher mentors, have their classrooms strategically located within close proximity of each other, thus fostering collegiality and support for each other. Literacy and math coaches provide additional support and follow-up to ensure successful implementation of new learning strategies.
  - Administrators use a research-based rubric to ascertain effective teacher practice, and provide formal and informal feedback on a consistent basis. Formal feedback captures clear expectations aligned to the school’s focus relative to specifics as delineated in the framework. For Cycle 1, a Professional Growth Focus template outlined expectations specific to a component within the domain of Classroom Environment. Coaches were charged with supporting teachers in creating environments conducive to teaching and learning. Administrative feedback paralleled these expectations with articulated next steps, resulting in increased alignment across classrooms and a deeper understanding of effective practice.
- The school communicates high expectations to all constituents around teaching and learning and implements an accountability system to increase teacher and student performance. (3.4)

- The school's handbook and circulars capture policy decisions aligned to the chosen framework and Quality Review rubric, ensuring that teachers have an understanding of Citywide expectations. A classroom expectations guide explicitly details school-wide norms relative to specific components in the school's rubric. The school's accountability system provides clear expectations for using data to set goals. During data talk sessions, teachers and supervisors identify SMART goals based on particular data, following which teachers reflect on their practice and set next instructional steps to ensure that students meet their learning goals. This practice has resulted in a coherent school wide accountability system.
- Parent Action Committee meetings provide opportunities for school leaders to articulate expectations about attendance, academic performance, and postsecondary readiness to families. Grade level expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards are discussed with parents to deepen their understanding of the rigorous work. School progress reports, that are also translated into Spanish, are sent home to families, and include student's interim progression of reading levels, short-term benchmarks, and suggestions how children can be supported at home. These reports have enabled families to focus their support to help prepare their children for the next level.
- All teachers engage in professional collaboration using a common focus to improve practice and increase performance. (4.2)
  - Teachers meet regularly to discuss and analyze student work, during which, "there is always a data component" shared the principal. The school's inquiry team expectations and norms keep teachers on task and provide a history of the team's discussions and instructional decision-making. Probing and guided questions around instruction and student learning outcomes lead to newly identified strategies and well-matched student supports.
  - School leaders who embrace distributed leadership selected teachers to be grade leaders and mentors, who together with the literacy and math coaches comprise the school's instructional team. Identified teachers, grade leaders, and coaches, meet with administration and conduct learning walks to ensure that teaching practices align with the school's expectations for teaching and learning.
- School leaders and faculty engage families in an open exchange of information regarding student progress. (2.4)
  - The school created a Comprehensive Education Plan overview for parents, also translated into Spanish, providing access to its content. At parent meetings, school leaders, and faculty, discuss student progress and steps taken to address concerns. The principal shared, "We are building a language with parents so that they can speak about progress, school initiatives, Citywide instructional expectations, and the Common Core Learning Standards." One parent shared, "The principal promotes a more collaborative environment."

- The principal's open door policy has increased parent involvement and enables parents to meet with school leaders. Volunteers are assigned classrooms in which to work with students, providing additional support. Coffee hour hosted by school leaders each month, serves as a forum for parents to voice their concerns. The Parent Action Committee poses questions to school leaders that are addressed at future meetings. As a result, parents feel they have a voice in the school's decision-making process providing input in the revision of the school's progress report. One parent shared, "The principal has helped the school a lot. We can see her anytime. Her door is always open for students, parents, and teachers."

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

- Enrich the curriculum to ensure that academic tasks in all classrooms are challenging and that questioning extends student thinking to maximize learning. (1.1)
  - Current initiatives to integrate the Common Core Learning Standards into the school's curriculum include looking at student work and identifying the instructional gaps. However, instruction that emphasizes higher order thinking was not evident in classrooms. High performing students are not engaged in rigorous academic tasks. Learning experiences are not sufficiently modified to increase the rigor or include appropriate scaffolds for students with disabilities and second language learners. The lack of rigor in students' learning experiences do not cognitively challenge all students, thus hampering them from making accelerated progress.
- Promote greater consistency in planning differentiated instruction to include appropriate supports and challenges in order to meet the needs of all students consistently. (1.2)
  - In some classrooms, teaching strategies provided differentiated learning experiences. In one early childhood classroom, a teacher was working with a small group of students, another group was engaged in hands-on activities involving sentence strips, and a third group of students worked with a student teacher developing their phonemic awareness. In this classroom, engaged students made meaning of their tasks. However, this practice of differentiated instruction is not evident in all classrooms. Throughout the school, teaching techniques and questioning do not sufficiently challenge higher performing students. Moreover, the lack of academic discourse hampers comprehension and language acquisition resulting in uneven levels of engagement.
- Expand teachers' assessment practices to include the use of on-going checks for understanding to ensure students' learning needs are consistently met. (2.2)
  - Teachers supplement summative data with classroom assessment data, using end-of-unit posttests, running records, and quizzes. Teams of teachers and individual teachers create assessments and rubrics aligned with the school's literacy program. At the present time, teachers do not use quick, on-the-spot checks during a lesson to determine the level of student understanding of the concept being taught. The lack of on-going

checks for understanding, prevent teachers from accurately and effectively adjusting their lessons mid-way and ensuring that all students' learning needs are met.

- Create a transparent system for measuring progress of student subgroups towards interim benchmarks to make timely revisions to pedagogy and/or curriculum. (5.3).
  - The school analyzes student performance and teacher development data when it revises its instructional plans. Cabinet and data meetings include progress monitoring. However, as of yet, school leaders have not developed a system for measuring progress of student subgroups against interim benchmarks so that midcourse revisions to pedagogy and curriculum are made in a timely fashion to ensure that all students' needs are being met. Individual teachers and teacher teams have established goals for identified students but have not developed a system to measure progress toward those goals, thus missing out on making instructional decisions that are informed and effective.
- Ensure teacher feedback to students is precise and includes next instructional steps toward mastery of the Common Core Learning Standards. (3.3)
  - School leaders and faculty use periodic and formative assessments to track progress and adjust instructional plans. Progress reports are sent home to families three times a year. Across the grades, there is consistency in how teachers provide feedback to students. However, the feedback provided to students is not suitably specific to inform students of next steps necessary to advance learning. Throughout the school student feedback is generic and often relates to spelling and/or grammatical next steps. The lack of specific feedback hinders their mastery of the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: Pura Belpre 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>	

**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		

<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>