

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. 088

S. Silverstein Little Sparrow School

**1340 Sheridan Avenue
Bronx, NY 10456**

Principal: Melinda Hyer

Dates of review: March 5 – 6, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Anne Laitres

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. X088 - S. Silverstein Little Sparrow School is an Elementary school with 221 students from kindergarten through grade 3. The school population comprises 33% Black, 66% Hispanic, 0% White, 1% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 93.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is Proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The curriculum consistently engages students in rigorous tasks that result in higher order thinking and work products. (1.1)
 - The curriculum is aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards across grade levels and content areas as demonstrated in the curriculum maps. Evaluation of the teacher created units in mathematics and literacy found coherence with the Common Core Performance Tasks. Units contain high interest, engaging learning experiences across the grades with a high level of challenge for all students, including English language learners and students with special needs. Curriculum units include mini-lesson, resources, trips, Depth of Knowledge alignment, and rigorous assessment. Pre and post assessments, incorporated into every unit, provide the opportunity to plan for flexible groupings and the suggested resources delineate multiple entry points. The arts are embedded through drama and the visual arts allowing additional opportunities to extend learning and engage students in higher order thinking as evidenced in student work products.
 - Students, who are performing below grade level as measured by multiple assessments including the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, are provided with Academic Intervention Services five times a week and intervention programs such as the Wilson Reading Program. Extension tasks in the units of study address the needs of higher achieving students. This provides all students the opportunity to reach their full potential.
- Strategic organizational decisions regarding the use of resources support the school's goals and improve student outcomes. (1.3)
 - The declining student enrollment resulted in budget cuts and loss of services. The principal creatively aligned resources to provide maximum impact for student achievement. The school applied for and received grants to supplement the loss of funds. The Helmsley Grant provides additional days of professional development and curriculum design. Language development support provided in English as a second language classes in grades 1 and 2 and the transitional bilingual 2/3 bridge class have resulted in accelerated speaking and listening proficiency for English Language Learners. Cluster teachers, as well as the art and drama teachers, work with middle level readers during guided reading time. This intentional use of teacher assignments and securing additional funds ensures students attain the high expectations the school has for all its students.
 - Analysis of data from reading assessments indicated a need to address comprehension. Teachers and administration formed a book study group focusing specifically on highly effective reading comprehension strategies. Grade level teams meet weekly for common planning \ to share best practices, discuss, develop or evaluate learning plans and review assessment data. Four inquiry teams meet twice a week to

assess student writing products using a rubric and designing next steps. Teachers use the next steps as goal setting for individual children. This focused use of teacher meeting time has resulted in careful analysis of student strengths and needs leading to proficiency in student writing products.

- Teachers consistently develop and use multiple sources of data to inform classroom practice resulting in improved student outcomes. (2.2)
 - Teachers use a multitude of assessments including Fountas & Pinnell, state assessments, periodic assessments, progress monitoring, and “Next Steps and Goals” charts. During common planning, teachers analyze student work to address strengths and areas for improvement and adapt the curriculum. Teachers use data from pre and post assessments within units of study to individualize instruction for students’ targeted needs. Content areas incorporate unit and comprehensive assessments throughout the year. This has resulted in meeting the needs of all students and improving performance on interim assessments.
 - Conferencing is used extensively by the teachers to check for understanding and address the gaps in instruction. Across the classrooms, teachers do interim checks during lessons and provide opportunities for student sharing. There are criteria charts in the classrooms that are used by children to assess their own progress. This results in students striving to reach higher levels of achievement as measured by progress reports.
- School leaders and faculty effectively track progress toward learning goals resulting in increased student achievement. (3.3)
 - Staff and administration use data meetings to prepare next steps and develop instructional goals for groups and individual students. These include pre and post reading and writing assessments that supplement the formative assessments of Fountas & Pinnell. The data on each child is collected in individual binders and used in grouping and to individualize instruction. The NYSESLAT indicated reading and writing as areas that require more rigorous instruction for English language learners. The Intervention team identifies and provides targeted instruction tailored to the needs of at risk students. As a result of this thoughtful tracking of progress, student achievement on informal and formal assessments show progress for all students, including English language learners and students with special needs.
 - Parents are informed about their child’s progress through Report Cards and Reading Progress Reports. Parents of struggling students meet six times a year with teachers. Parents are advised in writing when their child’s promotion is in doubt. Curriculum workshops provide parents with strategies to use at home to build literacy and content area skills. This results in the ability of parents to impact positively student achievement.
- School leaders set clear expectations for classroom teaching that result in reflective practice and professional growth for all teachers. (4.1)

- Kim Marshall's Teacher Evaluation Rubric provides teachers with effective feedback that is consistent and cohesive. The framework sets clear expectations and a common language to reflect on practice. Administration makes short, targeted visits to classrooms several times a month, followed by interactive conversations about improving practice. Formal observation is done twice a year with the objective of giving teachers a clear assessment of where they stand in all six performance areas and connected to their individual goals. This results in teachers reflecting on their work to improve their practice and thereby improve student outcomes.
- Professional development is based on need as articulated by teachers and observed by school leaders. New initiatives are the focus of faculty conferences. An analysis of student work products provides areas where teacher practice can be furthered using study groups, modeling, and teacher support through inter-visitations. This has led to an improvement in student work as evidenced by interim assessments.
- The school provides a safe environment and partners with organizations to support social development and academic success for all students. (4.4)
 - As indicated in the School Survey, there is a high level of trust and respect in the school. Parents and teachers find the school safe and free of any evidence of bullying or racial or cultural bias. Staff and students are respectful to each other. This safe and inclusive school culture is evident in increased attendance.
 - The school partners with multiple organizations to advance the school's goals and provide supports for social emotional, physical, and academic growth. A partnership with the New York Public Library provides direct delivery of books using an automated ordering system within the school. Partnerships with private schools provide summer enrichment. Soccer training and tennis lessons are provided at Randall's Island. Literacy activities through puppetry and drama are available to parents and students. Learning Leaders provide the third grade with activities involving symmetry and architecture along with guided visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This results in a high level of student involvement leading to a high level of academic engagement.

What the school needs to improve

- Maximize the implementation of the school's belief about how students learn to meet the needs of diverse students and maximize higher order thinking. (1.2)
 - Teacher planning is based on the coherent belief that children learn best when provided with challenging experiences that are connected to prior learning and accessible to all learners. Teacher teams analyze student work to plan instruction. Conferencing provides an opportunity to set goals and clarify areas of improvement needed by individual students and groups of students. However, questioning and discussion techniques that effectively extend student thinking is not an embedded practice across classrooms limiting increased student performance as indicated by interim assessments.

- In some classrooms questioning is not used effectively to challenge students. Questions often remain at the skills/concept level of Depth of Knowledge. In two mathematics classes, children were asked to demonstrate equal sets but were not asked to explain the solution. Discussions rose to Level 3 in Depth of Knowledge in a second grade reading class where students reading a mystery hypothesized and drew conclusions based on the evidence in the book. Questioning and discussion techniques are not consistent across grades limiting the school's ability to maximize higher order thinking and engagement.
- Improve the process of involving families in decision making and open discussions to increase their understanding of student performance with regard to the Common Core Learning Standards. (2.4)
 - Parent/teacher conferences inform parents of their children's progress and the next steps toward meeting their goals. Reading and testing workshops are available throughout the year and parents have access to ARIS training. Teachers are available on a regular basis to discuss student progress. However, parents are hindered in fully assisting students in achieving their goals by their lack of information around Common Core standards which are part of this year's learning expectations for their children.
 - School goals and other decisions regarding the budget and Title I funding are articulated to the parents early in the school year. Parents participate in fund raising activities and volunteer in the school through the Parent Leadership Program while developing the skills necessary to enter the workforce. However, parents stated that they had limited input into the decision making process. The result is a lack of shared commitment on the part of parents.
- Expand the process of communicating high expectations to all constituencies to ensure mutual accountability for student achievement. (3.4)
 - Expectations for students are detailed for families in the Parent Manual. Further communication is available on the school web sites. At assemblies, the importance of setting goals for high achievement is communicated to students. There is a school wide behavior management plan and an incentive program for positive behavior support. Students receive attendance rewards and behavioral progress rewards based on these expectations. With regard to communication with parents around expectations, initiatives and information, the school makes deliberate attempts to ensure parents are aware of these. For example, there is clear evidence that prior to a change in teacher assignment the school sent two letters to parents, three weeks and two weeks respectively, in advance of the change. Some parents however stated they had not received this information in a timely fashion. Thus, this gap in the process for ensuring that all parents have received, and understood the school's message limits the partnership between some parents and the school.
- Sharpen the structure for evaluating capacity building and leadership development to foster distributive leadership. (5.4)

- Leadership is informally encouraged by offering opportunities as grade leaders and Chair of the School Leadership Team. The current structure however, does not include teachers alternating leadership roles in grade level or Inquiry Teams resulting in fewer opportunities for the development or assessment of teacher leadership.

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>	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