

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. 91

**Elementary School 091
2200 Aqueduct Avenue
Bronx, NY 10453**

Principal: Meridith Nasjletti

Dates of review: May 15 - 16, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Anne Laitres

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 091 Bronx is an elementary school with 715 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 19% Black, 73% Hispanic, 2% White, 5% Asian students, and 1% other students. The student body includes 35% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 90.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The alignment of the curriculum to key State Standards effectively engages students in rigorous tasks to promote higher order thinking skills and accelerate academic outcomes for all students.(1.1)
 - Common Core Learning Standards are effectively embedded within the curricula units for all grades. With the assistance of a literacy consultant, teachers analyze and dissect the units to identify achievement gaps. Additionally, tasks are differentiated to meet the learning styles and levels of all learners, including English language learners, (ELL's) and students with disabilities (SWD). Curricular is designed with emphasis placed on students' ability to engage in higher order thinking and project based learning, many of which involve research around social issues of interest to the students such as homelessness, bullying, and animal abuse. Reading and writing assignments require students to evaluate evidence and argue their positions using knowledge gained from the text. There is a heavy integration of the arts into the curriculum, including instrumental music, drama, and movement. As a result, students are engaged in producing work products that exhibit higher order thinking.
 - Teachers use effective questioning strategies, technology, and print resources to engage students in science experiments and expand their math thinking and problem solving, leading to accelerated learning. Teachers are using the Depth of Knowledge to promote rigor, higher order thinking, and encourage verbal expression through accountable talk. As a result, considerable progress was made on periodic assessments.
- Teacher practices evolve from a coherent set of beliefs about how children learn that meets the needs of all learners and narrows the achievement gap. (1.2)
 - Across the grades, teachers ascribe to the stated belief that students learn best when they are interested in what they are learning and are excited to come to school. There are opportunities for students to work independently in choosing topics to research. The projects provide multiple entry points, critical thinking skills, technology, and building habits of good readers and writers. In classrooms, students are working on the same concepts, but group activities are based on the skill set of the group. As a result, varied work products evidence multiple entry points.
 - Instruction that meets the needs of all learners is an integral component of classroom practice. Teachers are comfortable facilitating multiple groups working on different tasks. Additional strategies are evident in both unit and lesson planning for relevant subgroups. The activities of each group are based on the skills level of the group. Students experiencing difficulty with comprehension participate in an activity called "Chalk Talk". Facilitated by the teacher, students talk about obstacles to their understanding of the text and with peer support work through their

problems. Higher performing students are provided with extensions that challenge their thinking and participate in literacy circles to enhance discussion of texts. The evidence of higher order thinking is reflected on the bulletin board and in student portfolios and assessment folders.

- The principal effectively aligns resources to support instructional goals resulting in improved student achievement. (1.3)
 - Teachers have a common planning time daily and grade level teams meet weekly to plan lessons that engage students and provide opportunities for all students to develop higher order thinking skills. The principal hired an English as a Second Language coordinator to plan professional development and support all teachers but primarily teachers of English language learners. English language arts and math coaches provide direct support to the teachers both in the classroom and in teacher planning meetings. This alignment of resources allows the school to work toward their articulated goals of closing the achievement gap while raising the performance level of all students.
 - In addition to grade level teams and the literacy and math teams, an Inquiry Team meets to analyze student work, identify common issues, trends, and needs across the grades. The members develop strategies and skills that will support the varied learning styles of all students. The impact can be seen in improved work products and an increase in student performance on interim assessments.
- Teachers develop and use multiple sources of data to identify strengths and needs of individual students resulting in improved student outcomes. (2.2)
 - Teachers consistently monitor periodic assessments, grade level assessments, and end-of-unit tests to gain a clear picture of student progress. The information is used to form groups, individualize instruction, and for teacher reflection on student progress. Teachers meet weekly by grade to review student work with the focus on what students can do well, gaps in skills, with the focus on adjusting curricula decisions and instruction based on individual needs and a clear set of expectations set forth in standard based rubrics. This results in creating plans for students that move students forward toward individual goals.
 - Teachers employ a variety of assessment practices to check for ongoing understanding to adjust instruction. They use conferencing and unit assessments to surface gaps between the instruction and student understanding. The use of this data supports placement of students in suitable small groups to receive instruction based on their academic levels and individual needs. Struggling students receive support throughout the day through whole group and small group instruction as well as one-to-one conferences and by attending the academic intervention program after school and on Saturday. Students assess their own progress through the use of checklists. This involvement of students in their own progress results in students striving to reach higher levels of achievement as measured by progress reports.
- Teachers use data to set goals for students that inform instructional decisions and accelerate learning. (3.2)

- Faculty and administration track student reading levels and math unit tests to set group and individual student goals. This data is used to tier assignments for low, medium, and high performing students as well as to inform academic intervention service groupings and guided reading lessons. Coaches also utilize the data to guide support for those teachers who work with targeted student subgroups. This has led to a reduction in the number of students performing below grade level on the most recent standardized tests.
- Teacher teams meet monthly using data from formative assessments to review student progress and identify the needs of student subgroups and individual students. This information is used to set new short-term student goals and review the curriculum and effect necessary changes. Classroom instruction and student groupings are modified based on team discussions of the data as well as data talks held with administrators. This results effective practices that meet the needs of all students.
- School leaders set clear expectations for classroom teaching that result in reflective practice and professional growth for teachers. (4.1)
 - The school embraces the Danielson Framework to set forth clear expectations for teachers. The Framework provides a common language for the teachers to reflect and discuss their work with administration and guide their professional growth. Following both formal and informal observations, teachers meet with the principal to reflect on their goals and receive meaningful feedback. A collaborative culture exists within the school and there is a reflective professional learning community supporting student achievement. Increased student engagement and higher order thinking around more challenging tasks has resulted.
 - Professional development is designed around teacher requests, examination of teacher work, student outcomes, and feedback from observations. Workshops are mandated twice per month. Voluntary 'Lunch and Learns', grade meetings, committee meetings, teacher team meetings, and professional development led by administration, coaches, ESL and Individual Education Plan liaisons, and to a great extent the literacy consultant, provides a broad range of instructional topics that promote higher order thinking and encourage verbal expression. The result is improved teacher practice, increased rigor, and data driven differentiation of instruction.

What the school needs to improve

- Accelerate the process of involving families in decision making and open discussions to increase their understanding of student performance. (2.4)
 - Parent/teacher conferences inform parents of their children's progress and the next steps toward meeting their goals. Curriculum nights and workshops on a variety of topics, including the Common Core Learning Standards, are available throughout the year. Teachers are available on a regular basis to discuss student progress. However, parents indicated that there is a lack of consistency in information sharing and the ability of

parents to meet with teachers, thus hindering parents in fully assisting their children in achieving their goals.

- The school vision and other decisions are articulated to parents at the parent association meetings. The parent coordinator posts a monthly calendar so parents are aware of activities in the school. However, there is little opportunity to participate in decision making resulting in 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)
 - High expectations for all constituencies are implicit in the school's vision. The principal, through a memorandum of expectations, reminds staff of these expectations every Friday and celebrates teachers who are doing well. For students, there are exemplars and celebration of their work on bulletin boards. Parent workshops support parents in assisting their struggling children with strategies they can use and a point person to assist when necessary. However, these events are not communicated in an explicit manner through written communication, assemblies, and /or meetings, thus there is a lack of a full partnership with parents, and limits the accountability parents feel for their children's academic progress.
- Enhance goal setting and tracking systems to monitor student progress to improve their learning outcomes. (3.3)
 - The school uses formative and summative data to evaluate student performance. However, there is no consistent goal tracking mechanism in place to monitor and identify when the student has mastered a content area strand, thus minimizing adjustment of plans. Many students can articulate their goals. However, there is an inconsistency throughout the school in student knowledge of their individual goals and how to achieve them. Parents are unclear about how these goals were set. This presents a difficulty for students and parents to understand clearly identified learning targets. Therefore, there are missed opportunities for clear communication regarding learning expectations.
- Broaden the planning process to reflect on interim goals to assure the achievement of long-term goals with measurable outcomes. (5.3)
 - The long-term goals of the school are clearly aligned to the yearly goals of improving student performance in literacy and math and improving teacher effectiveness. The goal of improving teacher practice is clearly articulated as the overarching goal through which the school will achieve the goals for instruction. However, a gap exists between the analysis of student work and making immediate adjustments in improving teacher practice. This results in a lag in meeting interim goals and thus impacting further improving student achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

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|---|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| School name: P.S. 91 | 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 |