

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Sheila Mencher Van Cortlandt  
Elementary and Middle School X095**

**3961 HILLMAN AVENUE  
BRONX  
NY 10463**

**Principal: Serge Marshall Davis**

**Dates of review: December 13-14, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Myrta Rivera**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S. 095 Sheila Mencher is a K-8 school with 1231 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 20% Black, 68% Hispanic, 4% White, 8% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Students benefit from a rigorous curriculum aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards that focuses on literacy strands to close the achievement gap and meet the needs of all learners. (1.1)
  - Vertical teacher teams align the curriculum across grades and subjects and grade teams develop pacing calendars adjusting instruction based on the needs of students. Teams meet weekly to look at student work and assessment data, and monitor student progress. The aligned curriculum assures school-wide consistency of instruction and a framework for teacher teams to develop units of study that incorporate rigorous tasks. The results of the November Acuity diagnostic assessment show student growth in reading comprehension skills on all grade levels. A comparison of the New York State English language arts assessment data and periodic assessment scores shows an average improvement rate of 43% across all grades. Thus, curriculum refinement is making a direct impact on student learning.
  - Student work and data are used to plan challenging academic tasks that are well matched to student's needs. The school's creation of a variety of academic intervention programs in literacy and math are successful in closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities and the lowest third of Black and Hispanic students, as evidenced by 5 points of extra credit on the Progress Report. The school's rigorous curriculum allows students to study high school level work and sit for Regents' exams leading to high school credit at a 27.6% higher rate when compared to the average of peer and City schools.
- School leaders collect a wide range of data effectively to identify school strengths, trends, and needs that responds to students' academic needs and allows for effective instructional planning. (2.1)
  - An analysis of data that indicates the need to continue to focus on reading and writing, especially with the rigorous Common Core State Learning Standards, led to vertical teams working on creating rubrics and baseline assessments to respond to the needs of students. In response to identifying low attendance, the school created an attendance committee, and identified a guidance counselor to track specific students, resulting in an improved attendance rate from 90% to 93%. The school's use of a portfolio system that travels from one grade to the next provides each teacher with information relative to their students, allows for tracking of student progress, and informs instruction. A review of teacher growth based on analysis of reading, writing, math, and professional and leadership goals provides information to create professional development plans that meet the needs of teachers and increase student achievement.
  - School leaders' analysis of periodic assessment data and baseline assessment data effectively identifies students in need of additional support and enables teachers to create short-term goals for students and identify needed academic intervention services provided during the day, after-school, and at Saturday institutes, to assist students with schoolwork. Assessment data shows that these students are making progress as per the 5-point credit gain on the most recent Progress Report.

- The principal articulates a clear vision for the school with support from a vast majority of staff to create a vibrant learning environment that supports increased academic achievement. (3.1)
  - The school's goals and action plans clearly articulate a strategic plan to increase accelerated student learning. The Comprehensive Education Plan describes clear benchmarks with measureable goals that support accelerated strategies to increase student achievement. Graphs and charts found school-wide remind students, teachers, and parents, of student achievement data, interim, and annual goals in literacy and math.
  - Goal setting and action planning takes into account student achievement data and teacher performance data to create plans that support increased outcomes for students and staff. Four staff developers, in addition to a mentor, work regularly with the large number of new teachers to help support instructional goals and address changes in curriculum to ensure meeting the needs of individuals and relevant subgroups of students. Supervisory organizational structures now take into account instructional expertise to better support teacher development.
- The school engages in an open exchange of information with families to help them understand their children's performance, expectations, and progress towards meeting standards. (2.4)
  - School leaders and faculty communicate constantly with families six times a year, including progress reports as an addition to formal report cards. Parent newsletters, letters, text messages, phone calls, and workshops on curriculum and test taking, are very effective in keeping parents informed of school activities and grade expectations. School goals and achievement data with benchmarks, posted in hallways around the school; provide parents with information on the school's progress. The school leadership team members who attend bi-monthly parent learning walks learn about the Common Core Learning Standards and then in turn provide families with information allowing parents to become more involved as partners in their children's education.
  - To support family's use of ARIS Parent Link, the school purchased computers for the parent room and offered workshops on its use. Parents report that they use this tool at home with their children to view assessment and attendance data, and guide them with support for their children's learning.
- The school's system of improving instructional practice focuses on professional growth aligned to the school's instructional goals. (4.1)
  - The school is using a uniform research-based framework to provide teachers and administrators with feedback that includes strengths, challenges, and next steps. A review of an observation identified that although a teacher was knowledgeable in content material; students were not provided with ample opportunity to respond or suitable checks for understanding. As a result of feedback during an informal observation, subsequent lessons improved and strategies were incorporated successfully. Consequently, the school's use of effective feedback is improving teacher pedagogy allowing students to be engaged in and improving their learning.
  - School leaders provide regular feedback to teachers and identify teachers for direct support by coaches in a 3-week cycle. In addition, new teachers receive mentoring support, inter-visitation, and peer support from a buddy teacher. All

teachers complete needs assessment surveys and develop a professional development support plan based on class needs and personal needs in consultation with their supervisor to strengthen their pedagogical needs. School leaders monitor teacher's progress during their professional development cycles to ensure it is meeting their needs. Hence, professional growth is improving as teachers improve their practice and create a seamless instructional program aligned to the school goals.

- The school makes informed organizational decisions that align with instructional goals and support efforts toward improved student progress. (1.3)
  - The principal strategically uses the school budget to support teacher development. Four coaches and a part-time staff developer provide support to teachers, especially in implementing the new Common Core Learning Standards. Coaches' schedules allow them to provide cycled support to teachers based on the results of a needs assessment survey, are involved in aligning the curriculum, and participate in teacher team sessions. Teachers provide professional development in area of expertise after-school to colleagues as identified as areas of need during goal setting sessions.
  - Creative programming allows all teachers to be involved in teacher teams that meet at least six times a month. Regular collaboration allows teachers to create rubrics, share their work with their colleagues, and provide feedback to their peers, all of which pushes student achievement across grades. During a team meeting, teachers who used a collaborative assessment protocol to view student work against a rubric, discussed the value of the rubric, and identified student's strengths and needs. They further agreed upon a need to create task-specific rubrics aligned to an academic task, allowing for further improved instructional strategies.

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

- Strengthen differentiation of instruction so that all lessons engage students and offer challenging tasks, thereby eliciting higher order thinking and extending learning. (1.2)
  - Teaching strategies and routines are typically differentiated, based on student data and needs, during guided reading and small group instruction. Learning centers provide students with additional support based on their needs to reinforce concepts learned or practice new skills based on their goals. However, there is limited support or extension into the curricula in other subjects, hindering student progress across all content areas.
  - A general level of student engagement includes limited dialogue between teacher and student and minimal student voice with peers. Consequently, there are missed opportunities to fully engage students, thus hampering student progress.
- Strengthen assessment practices so that granular data analysis offers actionable feedback on curricular and instructional decisions and tracks student progress in order to implement adjustments that increase student progress. (2.2)
  - Teams of teachers use baseline data to create an action plan that addresses specific performance indicators, identifies target students based on strengths and needs, and propose how the needs will be addressed. While teachers have protocols in place that set the stage for some of their instructional decisions, assessment practices have not yet expanded to a level that would provide

teachers with actionable feedback around the effectiveness of those instructional choices. Although teacher teams and individual teachers analyze periodic assessment data and classroom assessments created by grade teams to identify strengths and needs of student subgroups, the tracking of progress and the adjustments to instructional decisions based on this data is not yet evident. As a result, the aptitude to which the curriculum and pedagogical practices can explicitly target academic strengths and deficits in a strategic fashion are not yet reaching their fullest potential.

- Increase the capacity for staff to strengthen the school culture so that students and families receive enhanced guidance and advisement supports to better address students' academic and social emotional needs. (4.4)
  - The school provides staff with professional development sessions on bullying, the Respect for All campaign, conflict resolution, the SAVE room, and classroom management strategies. However, teachers do not receive professional development that assists them in ensuring that all of these initiatives have a positive impact on a respectful learning environment, thereby missing opportunities to suitably address students' emotional and personal needs.
  - The school has a number of structures in place that support students in the high school selection process. The guidance counselor provides students with suggestions on selecting a high school, directions for completing the application and shares a listing of various open houses. The parent coordinator provides parents with additional supports during the high school selection process. While the school provides parents with workshops regarding the admissions process, parents feel they could benefit from more supports and informational sessions around the curriculum and how it is preparing their child for higher education and to be more active in the process.
- Strategize systems that regularly evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of teacher teams and other professional development opportunities that impact on building capacity and student learning. (5.4)
  - School leaders review agendas and meet with grade leaders periodically to assess progress of the teams work. Teachers have various opportunities to build their leadership skills through facilitating professional development and leading discussions at various team meetings. The administration effectively evaluates the work of teacher leaders by reviewing agendas, meetings with grade leaders, and providing feedback on presentations given by teachers to their peers during professional development sessions. However, data is not yet available to show that their work is building coherence between curricular, instructional and assessment practices, nor is there evidence of any impact on student learning.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Sheila Mencher Van Cortlandt School	UD	D	P	WD
<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>	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?				<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>	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?				<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>	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?				<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	

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

<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>
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