

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. 107

Elementary school 107

**1695 SEWARD AVENUE
BRONX
NY 10473**

Principal: Katherine Hamm

Dates of review: November 17, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Deena Abu Lughod

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 107 is an elementary school with 522 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 46% Black, 52% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes strategic organizational decisions that maximize active learning for both students and adults to enable the school to work towards its goals. (1.3)
 - o Resources are well aligned to the school's goals to enhance technology and increase productive time on task to improve student achievement. Many classrooms have incorporated interactive whiteboards that teachers are using well, especially in high interest subjects such as science, to engage students and model good practices in the organization of information. By starting the day with active vocabulary development and ending with hands-on science activities that students say they enjoy the most, students sustain energy throughout the day. Significant resources are invested in after-school programs to allow both remediation and enrichment well matched to students' levels to accelerate their learning.
 - o Departmentalization of the fifth grade capitalizes on teacher strengths, as they specialize in one content area and increase their accountability for student outcomes by using the comparison of responses and academic behaviors to address the needs of the students they all share. Consequently, this is resulting in significant improvement in students' academics. There are now daily common planning periods that the energetic and caring staff use to examine student work, and supervisors who attend weekly provide protocols and training in facilitation to build teacher leadership. Each fourth grade teacher assumes primary responsibility for planning lessons in one content area, which one teacher stated allows them to work "smarter" and focus more on improving pedagogy.
- Instructional leaders provide consistent, targeted feedback to teachers around specific strategies to improve instruction in ways that build coherence in practice across the school. (4.1)
 - o The principal and assistant principals conduct frequent classroom visits focused on process indicators to take the pulse on the implementation of new pedagogical expectations and initiatives. The use of a uniform school-wide schedule enables them to conduct these visits efficiently by content area and grade levels to surface the particular strengths of each teacher and patterns of implementation across grades and subject areas. Last year, the California Professional Teaching Standards guided informal visits and the school is now building on that work in transitioning to the Danielson framework, and aligning feedback with an initial focus on planning and establishing a culture for learning to build effective practices.
 - o Examination of teacher work and student outcomes underlies planning for staff development and teacher assignments. Since the arrival of a new principal last spring, teachers have been receiving accurate and timely feedback, and there are well documented logs of assistance that demonstrate the connection between feedback and differentiated support for next steps, including intervisitations within the school, visits to schools with similar demographics elsewhere, and an array of internal and external professional development opportunities. The principal attributes last year's literacy gains by students in the lowest third to the targeted feedback provided by her team.

- School leaders communicate high expectations related to behavior, citizenship, and professionalism to staff, students, and families, which promotes positive trends in student personal and academic success. (3.4)
 - o The principal has implemented a uniform framework for instruction that clarifies expectations for the faculty, and monitoring by assistant principals ensures that all classrooms are organized for effort. Clear teaching points, well-defined locations for resources and student work, weekly homework sheets, and a new data binder system builds coherence across the school to improve academic outcomes. Students are learning to use common classroom features, such as thinking walls, to help them recall strategies to help them work with increasing levels of independence.
 - o Clear communication with parents and students, and positive behavior and attendance incentives have contributed to an improved climate for learning. The enterprising family coordinator galvanizes parents to attend nearly weekly events that enable parents to learn about academic expectations, with particular attention to parents of entering students, who enjoyed an ice cream social at orientation, while the guidance counselor assists fifth graders and their parents to make informed middle school choice. Parents acknowledge that the principal's high visibility and open door policy provides opportunities to get personalized attention to aid their children.
- The school uses a blend of internal resources and external partnerships to create a safe and respectful culture that values student academic and emotional growth. (4.4)
 - o Concerns with safety have resulted in several school wide initiatives designed to foster a safe environment. The principal's Book-of-the-Month and the words-walk-away 'Talk to a Teacher' anti-bullying strategy provide a common language and set of references that students say help them manage interactions with peers with greater maturity. As a result, behavioral incidents have declined dramatically. In response to transitional issues observed in girls as they entered fourth grade, the science teacher created a 15-member girls club which has resulted in positive behavioral changes and high levels of engagement that carry through all subject areas. Based on this success, a boys club is now being established.
 - o An outside partner provides professional development to teachers to support humanitarian education, with a focus on responsible citizenship. As part of this program, students are exposed to important social issues, such as child labor and animal rights, thus broadening their exposure to real-life problems. A connection with the fourth grade social studies curriculum resulted in a drive to raise funds for victims of the earthquake in Japan.
- School leaders and teachers use multiple tools to capture up-to-date information about student mastery of learning objectives, which are used for making well-informed decisions at the school and classroom level. (2.3)
 - o Teams of teachers regularly review itemized data from common classroom assessments in literacy, math, and science. They have fashioned tools to help them organize the information so they can readily identify skills requiring re-teaching at the classroom level or those areas that are better addressed during the guided instruction period when push-in support is available, so that additional time-on-task is leading to improved outcomes.

- o The principal and her staff have established a common grading policy and teachers calibrate their understanding of quality work, based on the use of rubrics. Teachers understand the value of providing parents with grades that accurately reflect mastery, and the use of common assessments further allows students' classroom grades to serve as reliable indicators of performance trends.

What the school needs to improve

- Assure that curricula include rigorous academic tasks that integrate the Common Core Learning Standards and provide opportunities for students to apply their learning to ensure consistently high levels of cognitive engagement. (1.1)
 - o The school has adopted new commercial literacy programs that were selected by teachers last year. While staff are focused on implementing the programs with fidelity, they have made efforts to adapt tasks to align with their focus standards, such as summarizing and author's purpose. There are some exemplary interdisciplinary tasks that embody the inquiry approach the school aspires to, such as the pumpkin project requiring students to hypothesize, measure irregular volumes and areas, verify data, and write about their findings, which can serve as examples for refining curricula. However, because the program's tasks are new to the school, they have not been thoroughly analyzed to see how they embed higher order skills and have not been refined using student work to see where improvements could be made, and what adaptations are required for all students to be successful. Because the use of the curricula is in its infancy, it is not yet possible to evaluate its impact on student learning. While planning for incorporating tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards is more advanced in certain grades for literacy than in others, it has not yet begun in math.
- Expand the repertoire of differentiated practices so that all students benefit from suitably supported, challenging learning opportunities. (1.2)
 - o Faculty capacity to differentiate instruction is bolstered by new literacy programs built around leveled texts with teacher guides that provide questions and identify opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction. Teachers report that these features are helping them better meet the needs of diverse students. However, the use of the workshop model, particularly guided practice and small group work, is inconsistent across classrooms, resulting in some students remaining confused and unengaged while they wait for personalized attention. In some classroom discussions, teachers initiate all questions, which tend to be fact-based rather than interpretive, and individual students either call out answers or are called upon before their peers have time to think about what is being asked. Differences in class teaching strategies do not allow all students to be well supported with technology, visuals, kinesthetic approaches, and manipulatives. Notably an integrated co-teaching class with a large concentration of English language learners had limited numbers of students who were cognitively engaged with a quality of discussion. Higher performing students reported that they receive the same assignments of other students, which limits their potential, and outcomes from State tests in both literacy and math indicate that this subgroup had low growth last year.
- Refine the use of task specific, student-friendly rubrics and enrich the repertoire of formative assessment techniques to support teachers in making instructional decisions that help all students work to their full potential. (2.2)

- o Teachers use a very large number of assessments to evaluate student performance and to group students into low, medium, and high levels of performance so they can design small group activities for students who share similar skill deficits. There is however, a lack of attention to subgroups, so notable trends, such as the very low performance of boys in math, remain unaccounted for and unaddressed in instructional decisions.
- o Rubrics were introduced this year and are currently used for evaluative purposes. Students reflect on their work only after receiving feedback from their teacher and do not use checklists or rubrics to guide themselves productively and persistently through written assignments. Both students and teachers report that because students do not act upon the feedback provided during conferencing they are missing important opportunities to improve upon their work while it is still in process.
- Enhance goal setting and tracking systems to monitor progress of individual students and targeted subgroups so that students and their caregivers are aware of and can work on their specific next steps. (3.3)
 - o The school has set overall achievement goals for literacy, math, and science, and monitors the overall percent of students at grade level according to periodic assessment data. However, these goals are neither differentiated nor tracked by subgroup. This inhibits the school's ability to ascertain which subgroups are making the progress necessary to insure that the school is on track to meet its overall goals, and limits the ability to adjust plans to provide more targeted support if merited.
 - o A monthly progress report was developed this year to provide caregivers with more timely information about their children's progress relative to general unit objectives in all subject areas. Recommendations on how to support youngsters at home are not specific enough to assure a robust home-school partnership to further accelerate student learning. Students are beginning to receive specific feedback on written work aligned to genre-specific rubrics, but several students indicated they could not read or understand the comments. Grades are the only feedback students receive on math assessments, and as they are not encouraged to identify their own strengths and weaknesses in this area, they are not deliberate in their approach towards mastery.
- Develop clear and specific interim goals and benchmarks for all action plans to evaluate the effectiveness of promising initiatives and ensure extension of those that link most closely to improved student outcomes. (5.3)
 - o The school is implementing numerous, promising initiatives related to curriculum, instruction, and organization, intended to improve student academic achievement, behavior, and social emotional skills. Frequent, focused classroom visits followed by reflection enable school leaders to collect anecdotal information on how well the process of implementation is progressing. However, action plans with specific goals and monitoring checkpoints do not exist in either the Comprehensive Education Plan or other documents. While the school intends to use results from periodic and other assessments to evaluate progress, it has not specified what outcomes on these assessments would constitute evidence that the initiatives are on track. This limits the school's capacity to measure progress, celebrate successes, and attribute improvements to specific curricular, instructional, and organizational decisions.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. 107	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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