

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Bronxwood
Elementary School 112**

**1925 SCHIEFFELIN AVENUE
BRONX
NY 10466**

Principal: SUSAN BARNES

**Dates of review: April 05 - 06, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Deena Abu-Lughod**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bronxwood is an elementary school with 515 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 50% Black, 45% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% other students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school promotes a safe environment that supports collaborative relationships, good attendance, and appropriate behavior, which enables students to focus on scholarship. (1.4)
 - o The building leader has made creating a safe environment a priority, using a 'High 5' system to align school wide expectations for behavior. The guidance counselor involves students in a creative open house orientation tour, where students role-play to demonstrate appropriate behaviors in the lunchroom, hallways, and playground. Positive behaviors are further reinforced through Book of the Month discussions and recognition of generous acts, known as bucket filling. Teachers know their students well, and work closely with administration and guidance to ensure that students receive additional supports, including both academic and behavioral interventions, as needed. As a result, constituents agree that the school is a safe haven for youngsters, attendance has improved almost two percentage points over the previous year, and the number of incidents, which declined by over a third two years ago, are further reduced this year.
- The school has developed the internal capacity and partnerships to enhance students' social and academic development. (4.4)
 - o As participants in Phase I of the special education reform, faculty have received professional development in Strategies, Techniques, Options Prior to Placement (STOPP), to defuse challenging situations, and Life Space Crisis Intervention, a behavior management and problem solving program. These programs enable teachers to foster the respectful culture that is evident in classrooms. In addition, students benefit from on-site counseling and additional tutoring and mentoring by teachers, administrators, and parents trained as Learning Leaders. Despite budget cuts, 11 staff members and 14 parents continue to volunteer, so that many students receive services beyond the mandates which results in improvement in their academic and social well-being.
 - o The school pursues external partnerships to enrich the cultural and artistic offerings to students, such as music lessons with members of the Saint Luke's Orchestra. In addition, teachers lead many curriculum-related field trips as an aid to learning, thus broadening student exposure to the real world and building their needed background knowledge as they advance in their studies.
- Resources are aligned to create conditions for teachers to collaborate with a view to engaging students in challenging work. (1.3)
 - o The use of a school-based option enables teachers to supplement their weekly common planning time with an additional 50 minutes to meet as professional learning teams to examine student work and data. In addition, this year, four half-days were dedicated to the study of the Common Core standards so that teachers could begin to develop criteria to evaluate the quality of their own work and that of their students'. Significant resources were invested in technology such as Smart Boards and laptops that teachers ensure students use to heighten their capacity to produce audio-visual reports that are presented and celebrated at monthly assemblies.

- Teachers use assessments to identify student needs and inform instructional decisions, resulting in improvement for some students. (2.2)
 - o All teachers analyze a vast number of selected response and computer-based tests, teacher created exams, and reading assessments, to identify the needs of their students. They use this information to not only design centers that are intended to help students master the skills they need through additional practice activities, but to also form small groups for guided instruction, which is tracked using a reading focus sheet. In most classes, teachers use rubrics to provide holistic scores for written work, and some teams are working to develop child-friendly checklists so that students may take more ownership for their work. Additionally, there are some classes where students study work samples from the highest performing students to better understand the qualities the teacher is looking for. These practices result in some improvement for students in some classes as evidenced by interim assessment data.
- Professional learning teams are beginning to use an inquiry approach that is leading to deeper discussions about the connection between learning and teaching. (4.2)
 - o All teachers meet as grade-level teams at least twice a week to plan and pace the four major curricular areas. Teachers recently began to practice a protocol to examine student work, which is leading to a higher degree of understanding of the standards and is creating a foundation on which to develop common rubrics and checklists. In addition, teams have started examining the Common Core bundles and in some grades have administered tasks that attempt to align to the new standards. As a result, teachers are beginning to consider how to adjust their instructional practice to help students meet higher expectations. On some grades, grade leaders facilitate the discussions, thus increasing teacher voice in decision-making and building some leadership skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish a rigorous curriculum across all subjects and grades so that academic tasks promote rich learning experiences for all students. (1.1)
 - o The school has developed curriculum maps that align to State standards and that reveal a balance of fiction and non-fiction literature. Teachers have also attempted to incorporate a Common Core aligned task in literacy and math, although not all of these were embedded in well-planned units. Curricular revisions involve minor adjustments such as changing the countries studied or the books used, but are not built around any selected key standards. The school identified weaknesses in 11 literacy skills, but teachers cycle through skill-of-the-week without deliberate consideration to its curricular relevance. Supports for writing are limited so first drafts are nearly indistinguishable from final versions and students are not pushed to go beyond a surface retelling of texts. The lack of scaffolding for note-taking, summarizing, and paraphrasing results in some students lifting reports from web-based sources for which they receive high marks. Students with disabilities are not provided with opportunities to engage in age-appropriate tasks and discussions. For example, in a lesson on values and traditions related to the Constitution, students discussed their favorite foods. The lack of common understandings of rigor inhibits the school's efforts to improve student outcomes through strong curricula with suitable tasks.

- Establish systems to organize and analyze data to identify strengths and build on positive trends so all constituents can work more deliberately towards accelerating student learning. (5.2)
 - The school pays close attention to motivating good attendance by posting monthly data disaggregated by class and celebrating individuals and classes at the top. Behavioral incidents are also recorded diligently. However, the school does not make use of available technology to analyze location or timing of incidents to guide further improvements, such as in the lunchroom and at dismissal, where the bulk of the incidents occur. While the network has provided some tools to aid the tracking of academic growth of students targeted in the Response to Intervention program, the school does not aggregate data to support analysis by grade, class, or subgroup, or to track trends by skill or content area. As a result, the school is unable to account relative to observed differences, or attribute positive outcomes to particular practices, thus hindering the identification and extension of the practices linked most closely to improved student outcomes.
 - The school developed an additional mid-term progress report to improve communication to parents. While the report indicates up to four learning goals in each subject area, many teachers do not include comments and the holistic score does not provide parents with sufficient information to understand which goals their children have mastered. Similarly, comments on class work lack alignment to rubrics so neither students nor parents can articulate next steps. As a result, promising initiatives do not succeed in helping students and their caregivers act more purposefully upon identified needs.
- Build capacity to use progress monitoring across grades and subgroups to identify and extend effective practices. (5.3)
 - School leaders and teachers regularly review a variety of student data sources to monitor student progress. When sources such as MClass and Scantron revealed that students were “staying the same”, the school added three additional resources, including ST Math, Success Maker and Voyager, and created an afterschool enrichment program using test preparation resources, which resulted in some movement for the 37 participants. However, the school does not use these data to reflect on the relationship between classroom practice and the large number of students requiring remediation, thus missing out on strategic planning to support improving learning outcomes on the classroom level.
 - The school's ability to align annual planning processes is hampered by its incomplete understanding of the New York City Progress Report indicators and other data sources and its lack of established needs assessment practices. While students in the school's lowest third have sustained high gains over the last four years because of substantial out-of-class supports, less attention is given to students at the higher levels, resulting in lower gains for these students. The process of needs assessment does not include reflection on the effectiveness of classroom practices to identify the factors that contribute to student success. The school's inability to attribute positive student outcomes to specific practices hinders it from suitably aligning resources and developing teacher development plans to address gaps in teacher knowledge and skills and address the learning needs of all students.

- Improve instructional practice so that across classrooms teachers plan for and execute lessons that invite deep student thinking and discussion. (1.2)
 - o All teachers use the school's point of entry lesson model, described as whole group, small group, whole group instruction. They use data to design centers for teaching skills to students at different levels and to pull students for strategy lessons during small group time. Early grades make better use of suitable materials and strategies to meet student needs, as students use word walls and picture dictionaries to increase their writing volume, and teachers consistently record student thinking during conferencing. This good practice was inconsistent in the upper grades. Students remain occupied during center work, but are asked low-level "fill-in-the-blank", 5-W questions and have with few opportunities to engage in authentic tasks that would require them to apply comprehension skills in meaningful contexts. In cases where higher performing students were given substantive tasks that could not be completed during the literacy block, there was no requirement to finish assignments as homework. End-of-lesson shares serve as activity reports, but are not designed to assess student learning or generate deeper understandings, and at no time were students encouraged to discuss or extend ideas. Consequently, in many classes, low quality work is rewarded and students are not pushed to invest effort to attain higher levels of achievement.
- Use the observation process to provide quality feedback to promote teachers' professional growth so that so that all students benefit from effective classroom practice. (4.1)
 - o Although administrators conduct one formal and several informal observations with teachers each year, these observations do not typically involve an examination of student work and data. While administrators are now creating tools that reference the Danielson framework, neither supervisors nor teachers demonstrate familiarity with the specific attributes of the rubric and feedback is not focused on high leverage practices or aligned to the goals the teachers set for themselves. Next steps include "post aim" and "place group tasks into pocket folders" and reveal some misconceptions about recently introduced concepts, such as requesting teachers to monitor the Depth of Knowledge for each student. While a full-time teacher center coach readily and frequently supports teachers on request, one teacher was directed to seek assistance from six staff members to learn to plan lessons. The absence of alignment between instructional goals, feedback to teachers, and uneven levels of support, results in missed opportunities to promote teacher growth and reflection to improve instructional practices.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Bronxwood	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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