

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Pablo Casals Middle School

Middle School 181

800 Baychester Avenue

Bronx

NY 10475

Principal: Christopher Warnock

Dates of review: January 12-13, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Elizabeth A. White

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Pablo Casals is a middle school with 605 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 64% Black, 26% Hispanic, 4% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 21% 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 94.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has effectively taken steps to embed key foci based on Common Core Standards into the curricula and has provided data-based differentiated learning opportunities resulting in effective supports for all students. 1.1
 - Based on student needs identified in assessment data the school has prioritized writing, specifically argumentative composition, as the focus for embedding Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) across disciplines resulting in improved proficiency in written communication as evidenced by process writing in math and science as well as thesis based expository composition in English language arts, (ELA), and social studies. In addition to the mandated ELA program to address the disparity between student groups in literacy, the school offers a journalism class resulting in the strengthening of vocabulary development and evidence-based writing prowess across subgroups.
 - The school offers a zero period of tutorial and enrichment support, for all students across achievement levels in math and literacy, including higher achievers who attend Regents' classes. Students are assigned by need based on interim assessments and classroom level data and are regrouped as new data is analyzed. High passing rate for Integrated Algebra (100%) and Earth Science (75%) has resulted in the school expanding the number of students enrolled in Regents'-based classes and adding the American History Regents. These efforts have provided effective supports and challenge reflected in State data that shows a decrease of students performing at the lowest performance levels and an increase of students performing at the highest levels of proficiency.
- Across classrooms, engaging instructional practice is aligned to curriculum enabling all students to demonstrate learning through a variety of means. 1.2
 - Through teacher collaboration, curriculum and pedagogical practice are consistently reviewed and adjusted to align with the thinking demands of the CCLS. This results in teachers becoming increasingly reflective of their pedagogy and supportive of the school's mantra "If there's frustration or boredom, you're not doing your job" by providing students with more rigor and embedded supports. Aligned with the school's focus on argumentative thinking and its forensic science unit in ELA, the *Socratic Seminar* methodology is effectively used by teachers to engage students in thought-provoking questions such as, "What does it say about Americans if television (e.g. CSI) has an impact on our judicial system?" In addition, students own their discussion by asking questions and assessing their peers by providing each other with feedback on their presentation around evidence-based thinking.
 - Students are allowed to choose how they demonstrate mastery of concepts in earth science by selecting from a menu of rubric-based tasks. Students have created "menus" for making slate, rock cycle lyrics, and greeting card baby announcements for the new formation of quartzite.

This choice of differentiated assignments are well-matched to student interest, resulting in high levels of student engagement.

- The school utilizes organizational resources to improve student outcomes resulting in effective supports that align with instructional goals. 1.3
 - The school effectively organizes student offerings to support and scaffold its instructional goals by adding technology and journalism classes to include learning to use the computer to enhance work through video taping and power point, and critical thinking skills to prepare students for the demands of the grade 8 curriculum and standardized assessments. This has resulted in rigorous application of interdisciplinary themes allowing for development of concepts across disciplines. Sixth graders have developed | Video trailers to support social causes such as 'Occupy Wall Street' and 'Women's Suffrage' by creating written scripts based on research along with supporting video footage to foster awareness and defend a cause.
 - Strategic organizational decisions for students with individualized educational plans such as split programming in math and ELA for special education teacher support services, and departmentalizing major content areas for self-contained students have resulted in a reduction in the student-teacher ratio, and instruction being provided by teachers with content expertise. These measures have impacted the closing of this subgroup's achievement gap as evidenced by their extra credit for gains in the 2010-2011 Progress Report.
- The school gathers and analyzes data using multiple sources to effectively identify strengths and areas for improvement. 2.1
 - The school utilizes a variety of data sources such as State assessments, ARIS, baseline assessments, bi-weekly mastery exams, quarterly comprehensive exams, Acuity interim assessments, mock Regents' exams, and a school-based community survey, to conduct trend analysis. This has resulted in an accurate assessment of organizational next steps and the rationale for clearly defined school goals reflected in the Comprehensive Educational Plan.
 - Data from classroom observations has resulted in a prioritized list of common teacher development next steps, such as focusing on student engagement, using a common framework for teacher practice. A redesigned teacher team structure enables teachers to meet and develop curriculum aligned to CCSS using interdisciplinary approaches.
- The school effectively communicates high expectations to students and parents and provides supports resulting in improved student outcomes. 3.4
 - Parents and students alike have reported feeling supported by the school, through constant ongoing communication about high expectations via letters home, emails and in-person conversations. They use the school generated *WEEBLY* web-based system and *Teach Ease* to view attendance, grades, curriculum units being studied, assignments missed, and instructional links to access help with concepts taught, resulting in families being better able to support their children's achievement, and

students having extra support aligned with their specific needs. In addition, progress reports with next steps for student growth are regularly provided resulting in clear direction for preparing students for the next level of achievement.

- Teachers engage in ongoing reflective practices that strengthen the link between curricula and improved instructional practice resulting in increased alignment with CCLS student learning expectations. 4.2
 - Across the school, teacher teams are flexibly scheduled in cycles enabling all teachers to participate on multiple teams which results in interdisciplinary approaches that align with CCLS in writing. Science instructors have sought out ELA teachers to help in the development of student written communication skills for groups they have in common, emphasizing common expectations across disciplines that results in increased transference of effective writing skills into content work products. Teachers use common rubric-based protocols to assess student writing and formulate new strategies to address student-learning such as a thesis-based writing template created to provide students with effective ways to organize argumentative composition.
 - Collegial sharing allow teachers to work together using varied strategies and resources such as the *Writeaway* website to support student learning resulting in improved student work products. Teacher team meetings that are rigorous and reflective, focus on an analysis of assessments and student outcomes on subject-based midterms, thus helping to pinpoint gaps in performance mastery for both teachers and students. This has led to effective teacher self-assessment and next steps for interventions for students. After reflection on mini-lessons, math instructors teach place value using a variety of examples to eliminate student misconceptions around zero in place value. They also set up topic specific peer-to-peer tutoring utilizing the morning intervention period to support students.

What the school needs to improve

- Consistently supplement the use of summative data with ongoing analysis of student performance resulting in meaningful feedback to adjust instructional practice for all students. 2.2
 - Based on data, web-based supports such as *IXL*, *Study Island*, and *RazKids* are used particularly for students with IEP's to provide them with additional differentiated support in math and ELA. However, while interim assessments have shown slight gains this has not yet resulted in sufficient classroom adjustments needed for acceleration of performance to achieve proficiency and close the achievement gap for this subgroup.
- Ensure actions based on instructional goals leverage change for all for subgroups resulting in improved outcomes. 3.2
 - Based on State assessment data all students have demonstrated proficiency gains in science including students with IEP's. However, progress towards achievement of the school's goal of a 5% increase in proficiency in ELA and math is still a challenge. The school has not yet

achieved the progress they expected towards meeting this goal. In addition, actions towards meeting this goal have not yet adequately impacted teacher practice regarding this subgroup's learning. While the school has rightly assessed the need for increased student engagement as a goal, this has not yet leveraged consistent growth in student performance in classes where students have IEP's.

- Ensure that all teachers fully benefit from supervisory visits that result in clearly defined next steps for teacher development 4.1
 - The school engages in frequent cycles of classroom observations based on focused domains from a research-based framework, as evidenced by approximately four to five to date for most teachers. Special emphasis is placed on teachers new to the profession. They receive individualized assistance such as mentoring that is logged to monitor growth over time resulting in effective differentiated supports for the junior pedagogues. Teachers receive professional development based on common needs identified by classroom observations and student work products. In a few cases however, individual feedback to teachers lacks specificity resulting in unclear next steps for improving practice.
- Refine systems for capturing student outcome data to enhance processes for identifying school-wide trends. 5.2
 - Teacher teams consistently monitor classroom data to revise curricular and instructional decisions. While the school effectively uses *Teach Ease*, a web-based platform to organize classroom performance aligned to grading policies, structures are not yet in place to evaluate aggregated data by content based on mastery and unit assessments limiting the ability to efficiently identify trends across the school.
 - Pre-unit assessments are effectively used in ELA to apply as a comparative measure against post unit exams. However, this practice is not evident in all disciplines limiting the assessment of curricular and instructional impact across disciplines.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Pablo Casals Middle School	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