

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. 209

Early Childhood School X209

**313 EAST 183RD STREET
BRONX
NY 10458**

Principal: Anne Keegan

Dates of review: April 2-3, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Ina Solomon

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 209 is an early childhood school with 256 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 2. The school population comprises 20% Black, 80% Hispanic, 0% White, 0% Asian students and 0% other students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 94.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well-developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School thoughtfully aligns curricula to key Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and successfully embeds higher order thinking skills and rigorous tasks so that all learners are cognitively engaged (1.1)
 - o The school has taken strategic measures to design curricula that meet the learning needs of all students including English language learners and students with disabilities. Faculty and staff aligned the literacy and math curricula to the CCLS in all grade levels. Pre-, mid-, and post-unit tasks were incorporated within the units of study to provide a detailed picture of student progress. In September, the baseline writing assessment revealed that all kindergarten English language learners were at a level 1 and, across grade levels, the majority of English language learners also performed at level 1. Through team conversations about curriculum design and student success, teachers realized that diving directly into a reading or writing unit of study does not provide all students with an opportunity to rehearse language, understand vocabulary or learn the necessary content to be successful in that unit of study. To build students' base of knowledge, teachers decided to precede each unit with an immersion unit that includes field trips, an intense review of literature and hands-on experiences with curricular content. For example, the kindergarten teachers, prior to introducing a writing unit on "Recounting," took the entire grade on a trip to the Bronx Zoo. Classroom time was spent reading trade books and studying zoos, then teachers walked students through the process of writing a "Recounting" story. Learning was differentiated so that students who needed more support were given additional guidance during small group instruction while those that needed less support worked independently. As a result of embedding supports for all learners into the curricula, the number of kindergarten English language learners performing at level 1 decreased to approximately 9% while 64% performed at a level 2 and 27% performed at a level 3. Similar progress was made across grade levels.
- Instructional practices are grounded in a coherent set of beliefs that inform curricular design and learning supports resulting in cognitive engagement for all students. (1.2)
 - o Brian Cambourne's Conditions for Learning serve as the guiding principles behind the learning experiences that are planned for all students. Teacher teams regularly meet in grade level bands to plan and teachers in all classrooms differentiate learning by grouping students according to their needs, using detailed charts that include pictures and age appropriate language, and providing opportunities for students to "turn and talk" to clarify their thinking. Across classrooms teachers engage various learning styles by allowing students to "act out" a sequence of events, use manipulatives to solve problems or sketch a response. Embedded in all curricula is the process of administering a pre-test that provides baseline data used to differentiate learning for students and a post-test used to measure student learning and teacher practice at the end of a unit. Teachers engage students in tiered tasks that provide various entry points into the curricula at students' instructional levels. This approach to teaching and learning has resulted in a 47% decrease overall in the number of students performing at a level 1 in reading (from the beginning to the middle of the year) and a 22% increase of student performing at level 4. The math midline data show similar gains. The number of students performing at level 1 decreased by 26% and the number of students performing at level 3 increased by 4%.

- Administration strategically uses teacher schedules to support school-wide goals that drive student progress. (1.3)
 - o To meet the school-wide goal and long range plan to improve student performance in content areas and implement CCLS-aligned units of study, the school has developed a unique structure that utilizes specialist teachers to provide small group instruction in math and literacy. During the coverage period the specialist teacher instructs the students in science or social studies. In addition, the specialist teacher pushes into the same classroom three times a week during the English language arts and math blocks to provide small group instruction. The principal intentionally places the newest teachers in the role of specialist to give them an opportunity to learn the school culture, understand the curriculum and hone their teaching skills before giving them full responsibility for a classroom of students. The school's Aussie Literacy Consultant and math coach work with new and experienced staff to plan lessons and ensure a direct connection to the school's overall goals. Reducing the student-teacher ratio and increasing the amount of guided instruction students receive builds a system of accountability among staff and raises the level of work produced by all students. In a bridged first/second grade special education classroom, for example, students still developing early emergent reading skills were able to identify rhyming words in a big book. Other students, in that same class, were able to listen to an audio book and appropriately sequence the order of events.

- Staff create a safe and inclusive culture where students are well known by adults that support their learning and development (1.4)
 - o The staff believe that a safe environment that supports a culture of learning begins in the classroom. As the first step to developing and maintaining a culture of safety and respect, all teachers were trained in the Response to Intervention (RTI) program which promotes a multi-level intervention system designed to identify and address those learning needs that may lead to behavioral problems. The online occurrence reporting system (OORS) reports revealed that most incidents of student misbehavior, while infrequent, occurred during lunch and in the classroom during the period directly after lunch. To address this, the school implemented the "Bucket Bucks" system during lunch periods that allows students to earn "bucks" for following lunchroom rules. The lunchroom behavioral system is further supported in the classroom. All teachers implement a system that measures student behavior against a chart with a series of facial expressions ranging from a smile to a frown. At the end of each day all students color in a copy of the expression that matches where they land, giving parents and key school staff a daily account of student behavior. The guidance counselor provides additional support for students' social-emotional growth and well-being by working closely with each classroom in the school to ensure that all students are aware of the safety and behavioral expectations. For example, the counselor conducts an age appropriate anti-bullying session for each classroom in the school and also monitors student attendance. All of the systems the school has in place to maintain a supportive learning environment have resulted in a decrease in the number of incident reports from 71 last year to 32 this year. The school wide attendance rate was 94.3% last year and has increased to 95.6% this year. Over the past 5 years, attendance has increased by 3%.

- School leaders consistently engage families in ongoing conversations about student progress and key decisions that impact the school community, enabling parents to be effective partners in their children's success. (2.4)

- o Administration formed a parent committee comprised of classroom teachers and the PTA president to determine the needs of parents and the most effective ways to meet those needs. The committee facilitates about three workshops or activities each month that cover a variety of topics from, “How to help your child with homework,” to “Playing math games with your children,” to “ARIS support.” Attendance averages about 15 parents per session. To keep parents notified about school-wide goals and student progress, the principal hosts a quarterly “State of the School” address. The principal has utilized this forum to explain the CCLS as well as the school’s vision and mission, with about 20% of the parents attending these sessions. Parents report that the “State of the School” meetings help them to place their child’s performance into the context of the larger school community, thus building a sense of commitment not only to ensuring their child’s success but also to the success of the entire school. Parents are made aware of their own child’s performance through a variety of communications. An instructional progress report is sent home three times a year to give parents specific information about their child’s progress, including information about results on CCLS tasks. Parents have open access to teachers at the end of the school day and each teacher also sends home a monthly newsletter that highlights classroom learning goals for the month and celebrates students with high attendance. Students also communicate with teachers regularly about their own progress towards goals during in-class conferences. The principal engages parents in meaningful discussions about decisions that impact the school community. When the parents on the School Leadership Team were introduced to the document that would be presented to all parents to explain their child’s performance on the CCLS tasks, there was confusion. The parents suggested a way to amend the form to make it clearer for all parents. Parent voice extends to the outside community as well. Parents successfully petitioned the city to install a stoplight at the corner. All of these contribute to parents stating they feel empowered with the resources, support and guidance needed to lead their children toward a lifetime of success.
- The school has an extensive data tracking system that is used by teachers and teacher teams to provide feedback to students and parents about student progress leading to targeted supports for students. (3.3)
 - o The school collects and tracks student data in all content areas, including science, social studies and art three times a year to measure student progress against baseline, midline and endline benchmarks. A review of the data by teacher teams prompted the school to design an individualized RTI program in literacy and math to target the school’s neediest students. Teachers meet with first and second grade students in groups ranging from one to three students during extended day to target specific learning needs. During the first cycle of instruction 12 out of the 14 first grade students that received targeted instruction met their learning goal; 9 out of 9 second grade students met their learning goal. Parents of students that participate in extended day RTI instruction receive a detailed progress report that outlines strengths and areas for improvement as well as ways parents can support learning at home. The comprehensive data tracking system that identifies the specific needs of both groups and individual students has led to an 18% school wide increase of students performing at level 3 and 4 in reading and a 15% increase of students performing at level 3 in math. The level of students performing at level 1 decreased in all content areas.
- School leaders provide individualized professional development informed by classroom observations that promote high-level instructional practices. (4.1)

- o All teachers, in consultation with administration and coaches, set three professional goals: two designed to advance the work of the CCLS and one designed to improve instructional practice using the Danielson Framework. At the time of the review, all teachers had been observed at least three times using the Danielson Framework and given actionable next steps designed to move their practice along the continuum. To further support teachers in meeting their professional goals, the school engaged 45% of its staff in instructional rounds: 6-8 week cycles of one-on-one professional development support. During the instructional rounds a teacher meets with the coach, Aussie Consultant and/or a member of the administration team to hone in on a specific area of instructional practice that needs improvement. For example, one teacher's goal was to improve the levels of questioning and plan for deeper conversation around text using Bloom's Taxonomy. The coach videotaped a read aloud and discovered that most of the teacher's questions fell into the lowest level of questioning. The coach and teacher were then able to develop strategies for incorporating a range of questions into future lessons. The remaining 55% of teachers who are not engaged in instructional rounds are supported through teacher team meetings and professional learning sessions lead by the instructional support team. The well-organized system of supporting teachers' professional growth and development has led to high quality classroom instructional practices.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the use of rubrics and student self-assessment checklists so that students are aware of their progress and instructional next steps. (2.2)
 - o The school uses rubrics on the teacher team and classroom level to analyze student work and make determinations about students' next steps. The school has also begun to use student self-assessment checklists for students to monitor and review their own work. However, student self-assessment checklists offer only surface level feedback, and therefore do not provide students with a meaningful understanding of their strengths and instructional next steps. This hampers students' ability to understand themselves as learners and independently improve the quality of their work.
- Refine practice for monitoring and revising long range plans to broaden impact on student performance and teacher development. (5.3)
 - o Teachers and teacher teams regularly use data and student work products to review student progress and adjust goals. School level data is also used to determine student progress towards short and long-term goals. However, the process of developing and revising long-range goals is restricted to the instructional team, thus somewhat limiting the ability of the entire school community to gain ownership of the goals and further refine instructional practice.
- Align school wide goals to increase student progress with efforts designed to accelerate growth and close the achievement gap. (3.1)
 - o The school has a set of clear well defined goals designed to leverage short- and long-term improvements in teacher practice and student progress. There is a measurable objective aligned with each goal designed to mark progress towards meeting that goal. However, the objectives as outlined in the Comprehensive Educational Plan are not linked to accelerated student growth measures. As a result, teachers have a limited view of student and staff potential from which to design instructional practices, resulting in potentially missed opportunities to provide an instructional program that narrows the achievement gap.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. 209	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			
1..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